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The Magazine of Mystery and Horror

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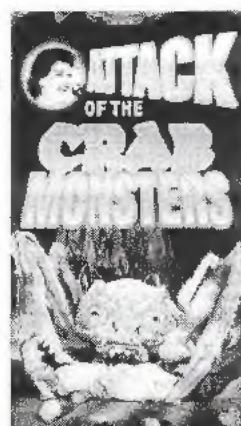
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COVER: Marilyn Monroe in fur, Christopher Lee in SCARS OF DRACULA (1970)

Scarlet Letters

Allow me to offer my sincere congratulations on what is surely your finest issue ever. Ken Hanke's appreciation of *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*, Boze Hadleigh's piece on the immortal Ernest Thesiger, and (especially) Curtis Harrington's heartfelt reminiscences of Whale—all were wonderful.

Thirty-five years ago, I spotted *Famous Monsters'* *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* issue at the local candy store, and savored every page many times over. I expect I shall be doing the same with *Scarlet Street* #30.

Thanks to you and your contributors for keeping the magic alive.

John Skillin
jskillin@infolink.org

Thanks, John. Thirty-five years ago, I was home from school with a bad cold and bored to tears. My father had gone into town to pick up the morning papers. When he returned, he knocked on my door and presented me with the very same issue of *Famous Monsters* you mentioned. For that reason, and because it was an exceptional issue, it's always been my favorite edition of FM. I certainly had it in mind when we were putting together *Scarlet Street* #30, an issue featuring not only our own *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* coverage, but our regular column by FM creator Forry Ackerman! As Nero Wolfe would say, "Satisfactory!"

This may make an odd comparison, but reading Ken Hanke's brilliant and enthusiastic analysis of *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* was like savoring a perfect glass of sherry. Hanke's wry intelligence made this oft-written-about movie seem new once more, with observations about Whale's directorial technique that I never fully appreciated before. Not only do I want to see the film again (no problem, I have the laser), but I also advise you to put Hanke under editorial lock and key to produce more of such articles. He makes it look deceptively easy to dissect and entertain while studying a film of more complex themes than one may realize, and it is a gift to *Scarlet Street* that he does.

Barry Rivadue
Address withheld

Well, it's not entirely a gift; we paid him a few bucks. Look to a future issue for Ken's keen analysis of *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY* (1945), along with interviews with past Dorians Hurd Hatfield, Shane Briant, and Dennis Wayne.

As a dedicated horror buff, I almost creamed looking through your magazine! Have there really been 29 previous issues? Where have I been? I

loved your Clive Barker interview and I'm looking forward to seeing *GODS AND MONSTERS*. How come nobody thought of Jeremy Irons to play Karloff? Irons is indeed a "ringer," having the same pale, greenish complexion, withered features, and lisp as the "mathster monster."

Keep up the good work, mysterious and horrible though it may be...

Les Wiehe
Boston, MA

Congratulations on the spectacular issue #30! It contains enough articles and features on many of my favorites to keep me engrossed for weeks to come. Not only do we get the superb coverage of the upcoming Whale biopic *GODS AND MONSTERS*, we get a fine article on *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*, an interview with Basil Rathbone, and an Ernest Thesiger piece which reveals much about this under-exposed actor. While all of your issues are "keepers," this one will certainly hold a special place of honor on my shelf from now on. Bravo!

In addition, I've had a question regarding Boris Karloff for some time. We

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Marc Lawrence



know a lot about Karloff's film portrayals as well as his stage and television appearances. But we know relatively little about Karloff, the man. Even Cynthia Lyndsey's fine book, *Dear Boris*, adds little to the story of Karloff's personal life. My question revolves around Karloff during World War II. What were his views about his beloved England during the war? Did he participate in the war effort? As other members of Hollywood's British Colony left the movies to return to England, what were Karloff's attitudes during this time? I realize that Karloff was, by then, too old for active military service. However, many British stars returned home during their country's darkest hours—Laurence Olivier and David Niven to name just two. Since he never became a U.S. citizen, and went home to England later in his life, I've often been curious about this little written about period in his life. I add that I am a great fan and admirer of Karloff, and certainly do not mean to suggest anything negative about him. Nonetheless, this topic would make for a long article or book that could possibly incorporate other war efforts of the stars at the time. It's a fascinating period of world history, and needs to be explored in greater depth.

James Sedares
Scottsdale, AZ

Boris Karloff was starring on Broadway in *ARSENIC AND OLD LACE* during much of the war, but contributed by acting offstage as well: as an air raid warden (just like Laurel and Hardy!).

Love that #30 issue! Great cover. Love all the interviews, and I especially loved *THE BRIDE CAME C.O.L.D.* I own a copy of *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* and I will watch it tonight. Now I just need a copy of *THE OLD DARK HOUSE*. Can you help?

Some comments and suggestions for future issues—how about running an interview with Brendan Fraser. And where was the beefcake photo of Brendan naked from *GODS AND MONSTERS*? Please remedy this. Yes, the film was excellent, but the book is even better. Had Mr. Harrington read the book, he would have understood the scene where James Whale asks the "icky" fan to strip. In the novel, the young fan is even more body ugly.

Continued on page 8

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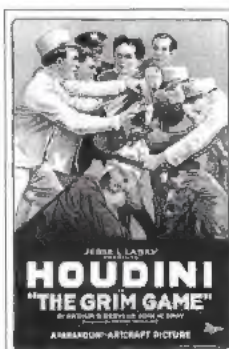
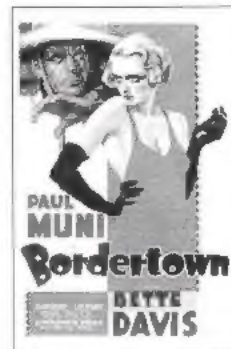
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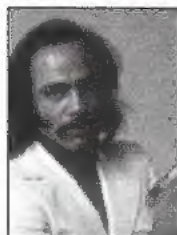


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SCARLET LETTERS

Continued from page 4

Love Ernest Thesiger, love Una O'Connor—how 'bout some more on these two? The reference to Ernest playing the Baroness from BRIDES OF DRACULA had me laughing aloud! (Okay; it was more like a haughty snort!)

It's likely that you'll get more accolades of approval for your gay coverage of Whale, Barker, Condon, etc. I know I don't even have to say this, but keep it up, especially in light of the Christian Right promoting hatred and violence toward gays. They murdered Mr. Shepard and it's not gonna be pretty for awhile. I for one am going to vote to show 'em we can't be beaten (literally) and just forgotten. And just for the record—I believe in Jesus Christ as my personal savior, but I will not call myself a Christian in light of their menacing agenda.

Back to nice monsters—am I the only one who notices that the opening scene in BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN, in which Mary Shelley stands between Percy and the Baron, is almost exactly the same staging as when the Monster's Mate is flanked by Frankenstein and Pretorius? Whale was a genius, a handsome Hitchcock, if I may so say.

Hugo Hernandez
Chicago, IL

Hugo, you need look no further than the Scarlet Street Video ad on the inside back

cover to find out where to get THE OLD DARK HOUSE. As for our "agenda"—as I've often said, the only agenda we have at Scarlet Street is to tell it like it is, or was, or may be in the future, where most of us will be spending the rest of our lives.

Boze Hadleigh's fine study of Ernest Thesiger in Scarlet Street #30 is something I've been waiting for ever since I first saw BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN over 30 years ago! It was funny, informative, and full of great photos! Kevin G. Shinnick's interview with Clive Barker shows what SS can do when it tackles a contemporary subject, and the same goes for Reditor Valley's talks with Bill Condon and Arthur Dignam and Ken Hanke's with Curtis Harrington.

I have a question. This issue has a review of the book Set Visits, by Bill Warren. I have heard there are two different versions of this book and that one is 40 pages shorter than the other. My question is which one, the first or the second edition, and why?

Keep up the spectacular work!
Victor Bassett
Miami, FL

We will, Victor. By the way, we contacted McFarland & Company, publishers of Set Visits, and according to them there is only one edition of this book. Nothing has been cut.

I have been buying most issues of SS since around #5—when I can find it on the stands (which isn't always an easy thing to do). I finally had to write my first letter to you guys upon reading the latest issue (#30).

Given that THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN is probably my favorite horror film, it's no surprise that I think this is the best SS to date. I don't believe I have ever read anything about Ernest Thesiger's life until now, and the articles on GODS AND MONSTERS have me anxiously awaiting the release of the film.

I didn't think it was possible to find stills from BRIDE that I hadn't seen numerous times before, but there were quite a few that were new to me and all reproduced better than I have ever seen them published anywhere!

The writers who contribute to Scarlet Street are certainly the best of any of the various horror magazines that crowd the shelves these days. I think it would help the sales and prestige of your magazine if you gave them a little more prominence to make SS stand out from the others. Perhaps mentioning their names on the front cover might get more first-time readers who were familiar with their work from other publications.

In addition, the author of the standout article of that particular issue might get some kind of special billing. Perhaps

Continued on page 10

Frankly Scarlet



I'm often asked why *Scarlet Street* doesn't put on its own horror convention, and when I've finished either screaming or laughing hysterically (depending on my medication) I always give the same answer: "It's hard enough getting out a magazine six times a year!"

And it is, too . . .

Besides, there are already more conventions than you can shake a stick at (if that's your idea of a good time), and nary a month free to schedule one. Chiller, Monster Bash, Fanex . . . they all put on at least one show a year, and there are new ones popping up all the time.

Besides, too, I think of horror cons as working vacations, and putting one on would be much too much work and far too little vacation. For us hard-working bees at *Scarlet Street*, it's an opportunity to get out of the hive, meet our readers face to face, and party up a storm after the dealer's room has closed. (Watch those sting-ers!) Last October's annual Halloween Chiller Con was especially gratifying, because Issue #30 had just come out and was met with unanimous praise. And you can't complain about watching the parade of monsters all dolled up for the costume contest, especially when you're sitting with the ever-legendary Forrest J Ackerman while you're doing it. (Torry was accompanied on this trip by his able

assistant and aide de camp Joe Moe, which automatically doubled the fun and laughs—as it did at last summer's Monster Bash, where we wound up croaking Karaoke with Ron Chaney, grandson of The Wolf Man himself, and his lovely wife!)

Still, if we're not quite ready to tackle the convention business, we do want to expand, and that's why we're making an effort to pump up *Scarlet Street's* video arm. If there's a movie you want, then give us a holler—and, if it's legally available on VHS, we'll get it for you. And if you're a fan of the classic Sherlock Holmes series starring Jeremy Brett and you're vexed by those annoyingly incomplete versions they show on TV, then come to us for the original, uncut programs and see what you've been missing! Television chops about seven minutes out of each episode, and, at 42 episodes, that's 294 minutes (over four hours!) of Jeremy Brett you've been missing!

Perhaps best of all, *Scarlet Street* is now in the music biz, and we're offering exclusively to our readers a truly fantastic new CD titled THE HAMMER FILM MUSIC COLLECTION—VOLUME ONE. These aren't rerecordings, but the actual music from 25 of the greatest Hammer Horror classics (including THE MUMMY, pictured Bottom Left). If you live in the states, it's available only through *Scarlet Street* and selected music stores, so check out the ad on the back cover and get ready for some really fine listening . . .

As I wrote a few paragraphs further up, *Scarlet Street* #30 has proven to be one of our most popular issues, and I want to thank every single person on our masthead for helping make that possible. There's nothing quite so gratifying as being praised for a job well done, and our *Scarlet* Staffers certainly deserve every gushing word of it.

There's someone else I want to praise and thank, though. Her name's on the masthead, too, in the "thank you" section, and no name is more deserving of placement there. You guessed it, gang: she's my mom (pictured Bottom Right with my father in 1941), and as I write this on the last day of November 1998 she has been named Volunteer of the Month at the hospital where she's been helping out for 20 years. (It's pure coincidence, I assure you, that the establishment is known as Valley Hospital; their appreciation for Mom's services doesn't go quite that far.) Mom runs a special section of the Gift Shop known as Robin Hood, and has brought thousands of dollars into the coffers in the past two decades. Frankly, I think it's high time the hospital took notice and acknowledged her contributions, and I know that the people she works with feel the same way.

Frankly, too, I think it's high time I acknowledged her many contributions to *Scarlet Street*. The Valley homestead

has become something of a combination office and warehouse since we started the *Magazine of Mystery and Horror* back in late 1990. The garage is filled to overflowing with back issues and our convention paraphernalia. (We've probably the only garage in Glen Rock, New Jersey, with its own indoor lamp post.) The basement (formerly a genuine, 1950s style recreation room) has become the shipping office in which Associate Editor Dan Clayton reigns supreme. The almost daily arrival of books, videos, CDs, and lasers have added to a clutter that threatens to reach the attic any day now. In fact, about the only place on the entire property that remains unassailed by *Scarlet Street* is the pool, and in homage to James Whale there's a good chance that we might someday "redecorate" that!

I've mentioned this before, but from the day I was nine or so, my mother was never anything less than supportive of my horror-movie mania. Television's SHOCK THEATER was a weekly ritual at our house. (THE MUMMY'S GHOST was the first monster movie I ever saw on TV.) At a time when many parents wouldn't have considered such a thing, Mom let me join the neighbors for a night at the drive-in to see Alfred Hitchcock's PSYCHO. (I made it safely through the shower and staircase murders, but when Vera Miles ventured into the fruit cellar I "accidentally" dropped something on the floor and spent the next five minutes cowering—pardon me, searching for it behind the front seat.) That same year (1960), Mom took me to see BRIDES OF DRACULA, which remains my favorite Hammer film to this day. And, needless to say, birthday and Christmas presents were almost always monster model kits, monster games, and 8mm Castle Films of—what else?—monsters.

You know, come to think of it, all this clutter is Mom's fault . . .

Richard Valley



[illegible]

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SCARLET LETTERS

placing a box around his name to signify special quality might not be out of order.

In any case, it's a wonderful issue and, while it seems to have reached Baltimore weeks after others had gotten to it, in less than four days I couldn't find another copy anywhere. Success definitely deserved.

Richard Barrack
richbarrac@aol.com

I confess, there have certainly been times when I've wanted nothing more than to put one of our writers in a box. All kidding toward one side (as Lady Peel used to say), I'm in complete agreement over Scarlet Street having the finest writers in the business. If they haven't yet attained cover billing, it's simply because I want to avoid two things: a cover cluttered with text and jealous feelings. I'd never want to single out one individual when it takes so many talented to make Scarlet Street a success.

Lex Barker is definitely the most precious jungle gem, the best of all the Lords of the Jungle.

It would be great if you pen a biography of him with all those priceless photos. Fans all over the world like me certainly like to have a book full of photos of this great guy.

Hollywood has over 100 years of history. Only a few actors one can think of as really flawlessly handsome—Lex Barker, Errol Flynn, Tyrone Power, and Robert Taylor. Only Tarzan Barker has the height and body to match his gorgeous good looks. Please write a book on him. In the meantime, an article filled with photos on Lex Barker in *Scarlet Street* would stop our thirst at least for a while.

John Lewis
Oakland, CA
Oh, my my my . . .

I discovered this magazine with Issue #21—being a Grace Kelly fan, the cover caught my eye and I purchased 10 copies! I must admit I did not realize the excellence of the magazine until that time. I'd heard of it, but did not realize it was a film magazine!

Since then, I seek each issue and each issue is an event that helps pass time on air trips each month. I intend to subscribe, but also enjoy picking up the magazine at my local Barnes and Noble, thereby helping off-the-rack sales. I particularly enjoyed the current issue.

#30. Again, eye-catching cover. BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN has long been a favorite film of mine. Writer Ken Hanke's brilliant article and analysis of this masterpiece is not only one of the finest (if not finest) articles to appear in your magazine, it ranks with the finest ever written on film. It rivals those of the late great W. K. Everson. I hope Mr. Hanke will be retained for Scarlet Street and I look forward to more such articles by this great writer. His *Charlie Chan at the Movies* is a favorite of mine! Thank you again for a great magazine and thanks to Mr. Hanke for his superb work.

Brian Lannes
BillieNash@aol.com

I just read Rick McKay's excellent interview with Lawrence Tierney. (*Scarlet Street* #29) What a piece! I've never read such an honest interview from an actor. Most interviews border on pure tedium, but this was one of the best.

I also had the opportunity to watch **BORN TO KILL** this weekend. What a movie! Tierney was a true bad-ass.

Anyway, great interview.
Scott Deitche
Address Withheld

I just discovered the existence of *Scarlet Street* magazine and really enjoyed Rick McKay's interview with David Manners. (*Scarlet Street* #26) I teach literature at a college in Texas and would like to see his novels back in print. Both

A Convenient Season and *Under Running Laughter* are as good as most new fiction; the latter work in particular would be worth teaching. So too, I used to teach a course in film history and analysis and showed three of Manners' films: *CROONER*, *THE MIRACLE WOMAN*, and *THE LAST FLIGHT*. The first and last of these need to be transferred to video.

The interview captured quite well Manners' wry sense of irony and self-deprecating humor. Is Rick McKay still in contact with him? And I wonder if he remains as lucid as he appeared in your interview.

Dr. Judy Cornes
Department of English
Odessa College
Odessa TX 79764

Rick? Yes, he's usually pretty lucid. Oh, you mean David! Well, we'd say sure, but why not check it out for yourself? There's a brand new David Manners interview on page 24.

I was so impressed with *Scarlet Street* #30 that I felt I had to write and commend you and your staff. So many film magazines today feel the need to cover so many topics that I'm often left frustrated after getting into a particular article. If I've just read a great piece on *Lon Chaney Sr.*, I don't necessarily want to follow it up with a piece on *Vincent Delfino* (whom I love just as much)—I want to read more in the same vein. I

was overjoyed to see *Scarlet Street* with not one, but five excellent articles dealing with James Whale and Co.! *THE BRIDE CAME COLD* by Ken Hanke was probably the most in-depth and well-written article I've read in any magazine for a number of years. I hope that will begin a trend of longer, more detailed pieces in the future.

As a devoted Sherlockian, I also want to thank you for *OUR MAN ON BAKER STREET*. Yours is the only magazine I go to at the corner book store to keep up on all things Holmesian. Just a fantastic job from cover to cover! Well done!

Jeff Allen
ISWU17B@prodigy.com

Thank, Jeff! When it comes to matters concerning the *Great Detective*, you can't do better than our man on Baker Street—David Stuart Davies.

Ken Hanke's article on *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (SS #30) was an outstanding piece of work, reacquainting us in impressive detail with "what is likely the finest horror film ever made" and deepening our understanding of its textual and technical brilliance. But why didn't James Whale use Mae Clarke in the role of Elizabeth again? She gave such an unaffected and charming performance in *FRANKENSTEIN*—and Whale burned her wedding-dress loveliness into your memory. Valerie Hobson seems such a poor substitute for Miss Clarke and is, for the most

part, much too actressy (I suspect a lot of her ended up on the cutting-room floor, too).

Raymond Banacki
Brooklyn, NY

Mae Clarke was indeed wonderful under James Whale's masterful direction, but it's quite possible that the brief vogue for her talents had passed by the time of *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*.

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the NEWS HOUND

Helping to make your Holidays a howling success, here's The Hound heralding future frights by barking some bulletins up your tree

Now Slaying

Director Gus Van Sant's stab at PSYCHO (Universal) debuts in theaters in December, as does the body snatchers in high-school tale THE FACULTY (Dimension) from director Robert (FROM DUSK TILL DAWN) Rodriguez and writer Kevin (SCREAM) Williamson. (The idea originated with Varese Sarabande producer and avid *Scarlet Street* fanatic Bruce Kimmel and his writing partner, David Wechter.) Disney's new effects filled aping of the 1949 gorilla tale MIGHTY JOE YOUNG swings into cinemas around Christmastime as well along with the holiday fantasy JACK FROST (Warner Bros.) DreamWorks' lavishly animated Biblical epic THE PRINCE OF EGYPT, and Paramount's latest entry in the Enterprise franchise, STAR TREK: INSURRECTION.

Universal's long gestating VI RUS, starring Jamie Lee Curtis, Billy Baldwin, and a seafaring killer alien, may finally be released in January, along with another long delayed thriller. THE 13th WARRIOR (Buena Vista) The latter is based on Michael Crichton's 10th-century tale of Vikings and monsters *Eaters of the Dead*, and stars Antonio Banderas and Omar Sharif. MGM's belated follow up CARRIE 2 also rears its telekinetic head in January, and stars Amy Irving, Jason London, and newcomer Emily Bergl as... well, Carrie 2.

Future Features

Hollywood is already strategizing their summer 1999 cinematic assault, which will include an animated TARZAN OF THE APES and a live action INSPECTOR GADGET from Disney, an AUSTIN POWERS sequel from New Line Cinema, THE WILD WILD WEST from Warner Bros., and the hopeful 20th Century Fox prequel STAR WARS: THE PHANTOM MENACE.

Has the Dark Knight gone bust? Insider gossip has it that Warner Bros. is so disappointed at the performance of 1997's BATMAN AND ROBIN that it's postponed plans for a fifth batflick. Be that as it may, Warners is very happy with its animated versions of the Caped Crusader. In addition to the futuristic BATMAN TOMORROW teleseries on Kids' WB, plans are reportedly under

way for another feature-length Batman cartoon.

It seems that other dynamic duo, Mulder and Scully, will have much better luck returning to the big screen. 20th Century Fox has asked producer Chris Carter to create another X-FILES feature. Carter has hinted that the new installment will be a prequel rather than a sequel... but The Hound bets that's just a smoke screen—courtesy of Cancer Man, of course. The smart bet is on a spooky stand-alone story rather than another convoluted conspiracy tale—the better to lure non X-Files into the cinemas. Production is scheduled to begin next year for a summer 2000 release, and may feature Carter in the director's chair.



INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE (1994) was a big hit for litigious Tom Cruise (pictured here with Brad Pitt), but he seems disinclined to proceed with the long-planned sequel.

However, other sources say the new movie won't be released until 2001. Trust no one, to coin a phrase.

Johnny Depp, protean star of Tim Burton's ED WOOD and EDWARD SCISSORHANDS, may team with Burton once again to portray lanky Ichabod Crane in an adaptation of Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Titled simply SLEEPY HOLLOW, the flick features Casper Van Dien (who came up rather short in TARZAN AND THE LOST CITY) as Ichabod's nemesis Brom Bones, and current indie-film fave

Christina Ricci as the coquettish Katrina Von Tassel.

Sean Connery gains a license to steal in ENTRAPMENT (20th Century Fox), a romantic thriller in the vein of Hitchcock's TO CATCH A THIEF. Catherine Zeta Jones, the raven-haired beauty of THE MASK OF ZORRO, costars as an insurance investigator hot on the heels of gentleman thief Connery. Director Jon Amiel is now completing production on the feature.

In LOST SOULS, a supernatural thriller now in production from New Line Cinema, Wynona Ryder discovers a conspiracy to bring the Devil to life in human form (didn't Rosemary and her baby beat her to it?). Ben Chaplin, John Hurt, and Elias Koteas costar.

Recycling Center

The aforementioned Catherine Zeta Jones has been cast in THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE, the latest entry in the Needles Remake Derby. Zeta Jones portrays the role of Theo, originally played by Claire Bloom in MGM's 1963 haunted-house chiller THE HAUNTING. The Robert Wise classic is being retread by director Jan De Bont (TWISTER), with Liam Neeson in the Richard Johnson role of the psychic researcher, and Lili Taylor as Eleanor, the tragic heroine originally played to perfection by Julie Harris. As odious as the idea of this re-do may seem, at least the casting choices seem intelligent. Production is due to start soon, with a Christmas 1999 release tentatively set.

A sequel to New Line's LOST IN SPACE feature film is in the works, and is due to start filming next year. All the cast members lucky enough to survive the first flick have signed on for a second... and third mission. As Robot B-9 would warn: "Danger, danger!"

DAYLIGHT and DRAGON-HEART director Rob Cohen plans to write and direct a remake of the 1943 Val Lewton classic I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE. Granted, Cohen has dabbled in the occult with his comedic production THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK—but this kind of unwise meddling may produce a stiff.

Ghostly avenger Eric Draven—or a dead guy who looks a lot like him—will fly again. Miramax is producing another in film in its CROW franchise, this one subtitled SALVATION. Production begins early in 1999 for a wintertime re-

Continued on page 15

Frankenstein Must Be Digitized!

by John J. Mathews

AIMING to do for classic horror what Steven Spielberg did for dinosaurs, Universal Pictures, in collaboration with George Lucas' Industrial Light & Magic, is creating a computer-animated FRANKENSTEIN feature film. The groundbreaking feature, produced by the newly-formed Universal Pictures Animation and Visual Effects division, is Hollywood's first attempt at creating a dramatic motion picture with realistic, digitally created characters and environments. It comes on the heels of Universal's live-action remake of another classic horror: 1932's THE MUMMY.

The as-yet untitled film is a direct sequel to Universal's 1931 FRANKENSTEIN, which starred Colin Clive as the titular scientist, Mae Clark as bride-to-be Elizabeth, and a then-unknown Boris Karloff as Frankenstein's creation. In this new, computer generated environment, such actual sequels to FRANKENSTEIN as BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1935) and SON OF FRANKENSTEIN (1939), plus assorted HOUSES and MEETs, never happened. Forty years have passed since the Monster was destroyed in the fire at the mill. Henry Frankenstein has perished, and the secret of restoring life to the dead—and of the electrodes that catalyzed his creature's re-animation—has perished with him. But the eccentric Dr. Pretorius (the memorable character created by Ernest Thesiger in BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN) is obsessed with resurrecting this forbidden knowledge, even if it means resurrecting Frankenstein's Monster to do it (Pretorius is making something of a comeback, having recently cameoed—in the person of Arthur Dignam, playing Thesiger—in the James Whale fictionalized bio flick GODS AND MONSTERS).

Lacking original specimens of the electrodes Henry Frankenstein created, Pretorius embarks on a journey to find the remains of Frankenstein's creature, and to retrieve the last remaining electrode from within its necrotic neck. Joining him on his quest is Herr Rainer, a mysterious man who suffers from an even more mysterious malady. (Can you say "lycanthropy?") Rainer is funding Pretorius' work in the hope that the dark secrets they find can cure his illness. (Early reports hinted at the new production being a sequel to 1943's FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN.)

The original screenplay is by Brent Maddock and S. S. Wilson, the writing team responsible for the TREMORS and SHORT CIRCUIT movies (as well as Bill Cosby's 1990 underachiever GHOST DAD... you can't win 'em all).

The main attraction in this production is the return of the classic Universal depiction of the Frankenstein Monster, as created by makeup magician Jack Pierce over Karloff's features and frame. (Whether the Monster will in any way resemble Karloff is at present an open question.) It is this indelible image that the filmmakers intend to re-create in lifelike digital form—and, in doing so, create a kinship with Mary Shelley's protagonist. Here's hoping their experiment in creating life from the inanimate comes to a much happier conclusion than that of Henry Frankenstein.



The 1935 classic BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN (Top, with Ernest Thesiger, Dwight Frye, Colin Clive, and Ted Billings) was the sequel to FRANKENSTEIN (1931), but now a new film is set to take its place. Contrary to rumors, the new feature is not a remake of 1943's FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN (Above, with Lon Chaney, Bela Lugosi, and the glamorous Ilona Massey.)



A Little Night Music of the Hunter

The Night of the Hunter first took form as a dark, Southern Gothic novel by Davis Grubb, published in 1953. The story became an immediate hit, landed on assorted best-seller lists, and was sold to Hollywood, where actor Charles Laughton directed a top-flight cast including Robert Mitchum (pictured Left), Shelley Winters, Lillian Gish, and James Gleason. Laughton, in his only directorial effort, not only appropriated legendary D.W. Griffith star Gish, but many of the silent film techniques first established by Griffith. The result was a film whose reputation increases with the passing years.

Now Varèse Sarabande and producer Bruce Kimmel have released a concept album of a new musical version of *THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER* by Claiborne Richardson and Stephen Cole. Singing the Mitchum role of Preacher Harry Powell, the psychopathic "man of God" who murders a widow and hounds her children across the Depression-era South, is Ron Raines. Sally Mayes sings the part of the victim, Willa Harper, and Dorothy Loudon is memorable in the Gish role of an old woman with whom the children find sanctuary. As the children John and Pearl Harper, Frankie J. Salerno and Andrea Bowen evidence talent beyond their years. If you're a fan of the novel, the film, or just musicals in general, you'll want to get this fascinating CD and you'll want to look out for a full fledged stage production, too.

—Drew Sullivan

NEWS HOUND

Continued from page 12

lease. No word yet on who will take on the title role this time.

In the tradition of *FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLFMAN*—well, not exactly—*FREDDY VS. JASON* has reportedly begun production, with Robert Englund reprising his rip-roaring role of Freddy Krueger. Look for it in theaters next summer.

Novel Ideas

Morgan Freeman returns as psychologist-detective Dr. Alex Cross in the upcoming Paramount thriller *ALONG CAME THE SPIDER*. Gary Feder, director of Freeman's first first-rate Alex Cross drama *KISS THE GIRLS*, returns to helm the latest adaptation of novelist James Patterson's popular series... *The List of 7*, producer/author Mark Frost's nifty debut novel about young Arthur Conan Doyle and his adventures battling the occult, is being developed as a feature by *CRONOS* director Guillermo Del Toro... *The Queen of the Damned*, the third novel in Gothic demigoddess Anne Rice's "Vampire Chronicles," may soon hit the sanguinary screen in an adaptation written by Scott Abbott. Meanwhile, fans hoping (or dreading) to see Tom Cruise return as *The Vampire Lestat* in a film version of Rice's second book of the series may have a very long wait.

Kevin Bacon suffers from six degrees of wiggyness in an upcoming film version of Richard Matheson's novel *A Stir of Echoes*. Bacon stars as a man who has frightening premonitions of a woman's murder. Illeana Douglas costars.

Roger Corman is planning to produce Isaac Asimov's *Nightfall* as a big screen feature—really, really big. Columnist Army Archerd reports that Corman will utilize the world's largest sound stage, located in India, to mount this saga of an ever-sundrenched planet that goes dark.

Updates Aplenty

SUPERMAN LIVES indeed: the new *Man of Steel* movie is back on track. A new screenplay has been completed, and

the bewilderingly-cast Nicolas Cage is indeed donning the famous blue and red suit. Director Tim Burton, however, has left the project. Shooting on the Warner Bros. feature is scheduled to begin next summer for a July 2000 release.

And speaking of truly bewildering casting... Granada Entertainment is finally going forward in 1999 with a big screen version of their terrific TV police drama *PRIME SUSPECT*. And who will play Detective Jane Tennison? No, not Helen Mirren. Oscar-winner Kim Basinger, of course. Now, then, don't you feel silly?

Right now it's only in the scripting stage, but the 19th James Bond feature is rumored to be titled *THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH* (Sounds more like a Sidney Sheldon potboiler than an Ian Fleming thriller.) Production is scheduled to begin in January and will include location shooting in Istanbul, harkening back to *The Hound's Favorite Bond*, *FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE*.

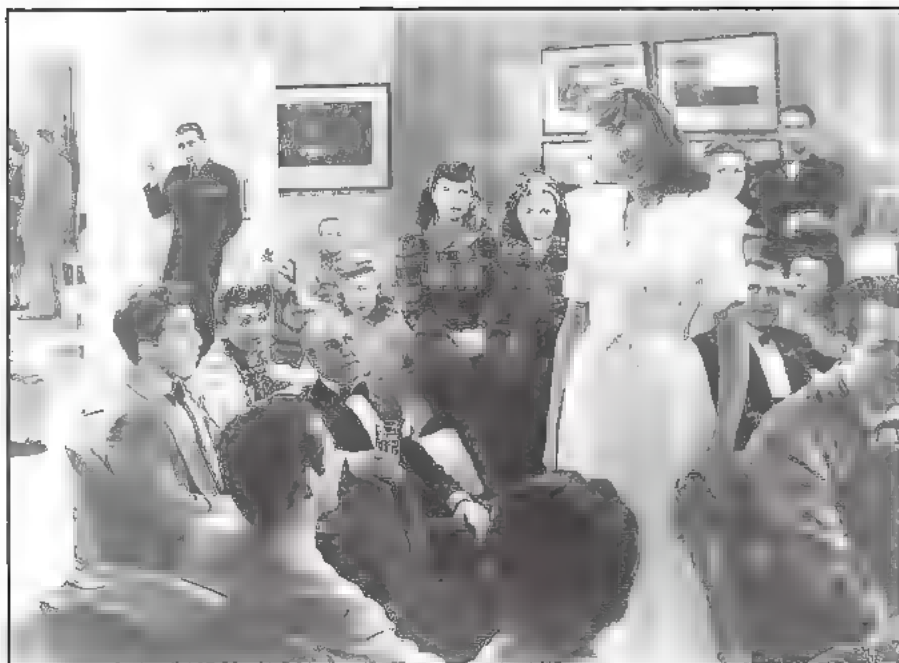
Television Terrors

The 1969 British fantasy-mystery series *RANDALL AND HOPKIRK (DECEASED)*—which American viewers may remember as *MY PARTNER THE GHOST*—is being resurrected by the BBC as a vehicle for the comedy team of V.C. Reeves and Bob Mortimer. Mortimer plays Jeff Randall, a private detective whose late partner Marty Hopkirk (Reeves) returns to help solve his own murder. The BBC plans to start production on the series by year's end for a fall 1999 premiere.

Former *AMERICAN GOTHIC* creator and erstwhile Hardy Boy Sean Cassidy



Norman, is that you? Nope, not as far as loyal Hitchcock fans are concerned. Vince Vaughn stars as Master Bates in the Gus Van Sant remake of *PSYCHO*.



Bogie's back and Baby's got 'em—again. Watch for the boxed laserdisc set of **THE BEST OF BOGART**, including **THE MALTESE FALCON** (1941), **CASABLANCA** (1942), **THE BIG SLEEP** (1946, pictured above), and **THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE** (1948).

(he was Joe; Parker "The Big One" Stevenson was Frank) quit his new Fox network series **HOLLYWEIRD** before it even started. This effectively canceled the proposed fall series, which Cassidy would have coproduced with scare sultan Wes Craven. Reportedly, Cassidy bailed over repeated network attempts to revamp his original concept of a trio of young TV producers documenting bizarre tales of La La Land. There's a slight chance that it may resurface on Fox as a midseason replacement, but don't bet the farm on it.

Tim Burton serves as executive producer for an upcoming live-action syndicated series based on the original *Wizard of Oz* stories of L. Frank Baum. The Columbia/Tristar series will feature some of Baum's lesser known characters from the original tales. With Burton's penchant for the macabre, these fairy tales are bound to be pretty grim. Watch for the series to debut in the fall of 1999.

The Home Video Vault

Already smashing up local video parlors are **GODZILLA** (Columbia-TriStar) and **ARMAGEDDON** (Disney). They're \$22.95 each, and are available in either letterboxed or pan and-scan versions,

depending on how you like your destruction served up.

Adventurous video fans can buckle their swashes with December releases **THE MASK OF ZORRO** (Columbia TriStar, \$22.95) and **THE AVENGERS** (Warner Home Video, rental; DVD \$39.98), and get a fear fix with **HALLOWEEN: H20** (Dimension, rental; DVD \$39.99). Also in December, laserdisc collectors can get their paws on new letterboxed editions of all five **PLANET OF THE APES** features from Fox at \$34.98 each.

Now available for rental from Paramount are two thrillers based on spy scribe Jack Higgins' books: **THE WINDSOR PROTOCOL** starring Kyle MacLachlan, and **MIDNIGHT MAN** starring Rob Lowe.

In January, well-heeled Bogie fans can splurge on a four-disc set from MGM/UA, "The Best of Bogart," which contains new laser pressings of **THE MALTESE FALCON**, **CASABLANCA**, **THE BIG SLEEP**, and **THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE**. The price tag is \$124.98, sweetheart.

Fearsome Flotsam

New York City playgoers can't axe for a more entertainingly grim production

than **MURDER AMERICANA: THE PEOPLE V. LIZZIE BORDEN**, opening Off Broadway in April 1999. It's written by Harry McEwan, an entertainer at the popular N.Y.C. piano bar *Eighty Eights* (Popular, that is, when the great Karen Miller plays.) The upcoming Theatre America production is directed by Jim Dowd. See it or receive forty whacks.

Larkers on the World Wide Web are invited to investigate "Sherlock Holmes International," where Jenny Newberry maintains an index of all known English-language Holmesian websites (<http://www.sherlock-holmes.org/english.htm>).

Fans of actress Ingrid Pitt, the full-blooded femme fatale of numerous fear films, can worship at her cyberspace altar "The Pitt of Horror" (<http://www.pittofhorror.com/>).

The Hound's Maulbox

Bill Barnes, *Scarlet Reader* from Australia, writes: "I enjoy your section in *Scarlet Street* and wonder if you know anything about the following. In *Scarlet Street* #29, David Stuart Davies concludes his interview with Ian Richardson in the OUR MAN ON BAKER STREET section. Mr. Richardson (who is my favourite screen Holmes) mentions he has been approached to do a possible film treatment of a play written 20 years ago by Charles Marowitz called **SHERLOCK'S LAST CASE**, with David Jason playing Watson. Have you heard anything about this project?"

Sorry, Bill, nothing concrete has yet solidified on this proposed production. But stay tuned—*Scarlet Street* will update its readers with the latest clues to all Holmesian happenings.

Send The Hound your questions, comments, and compliments at TheNewsHound@yahoo.com.

Gone, but never to be forgotten: directors Leo Penn and Akira Kurosawa, Batman creator Bob Kane, songwriter/producer Robert Wells, puppeteer Shari Lewis, screenwriter Catherine Turney, columnist Dorothy Manners, choreographer Jerome Robbins, and actors Roddy McDowall, E.G. Marshall, Jeanette Nolan, Megs Jenkins, Marius Goring, Leonid Kinskey, Phil Leeds, Valerie Hobson, Mary Frann, Richard Merrell, Persis Khambatta, Jerome Dempsey, Dane Clark, Gene Autry, Christopher Gable, Martha O'Driscoll, Vincent Winter, Jean Marais, and television's most marvelous Miss Marple, Joan Hickson.



Coming Up Soon in Scarlet Street:
Hurd Hatfield, **THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY**, Marie Windsor, Shane Briant, Edgar Allan Poe, **DEATH TAKES A HOLIDAY**, Houses of Wax, Paul Picerni, **WEREWOLF OF LONDON**, Film Noir Part Three, Roger Corman, and much more!

Crimson Chronicles

by Forrest J Ackerman



I've been traveling all over the country (and out of it to Montreal, Canada) for sci-fi and horror events. The Worldcon, of course, in Baltimore, the ComiCon in San Diego, and Reznhedz 2 in Chicago. (In the Windy City I was taken to their Monster Bookshop, where 50 fi monster fans lay in wait crying in unison "4E! 4E! 4E!" upon my arrival and the owner flabbergasted me by giving me a striking photographic portrait I admired of Henry Hull as the WereWolf of London and took a huge foreign poster—linenbacked!—off the wall of ABBOTT & COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN and insisted I accept it as a gift.) I lectured on supernatural literature and cinema at the prestigious University of Virginia in Charlottesville and lent lifemasks of Lugosi, Carra dine, and Price for a months-long exhibit there, together with the Dracula statuette Lugosi gave me in 1956. Then there was the great Chillercon in Secaucus, New Jersey (details nexttime) and two meetings which were tantamount to time-traveling!

The first: a class reunion in San Francisco with 33 survivors from the graduation exercises at Balboa High in 1933! A gulf of 65 years! Alas, no Ethel Anderson or Frank Sipos (sci-fi fan) or Milton Anderson or Jack or Yodko Mihalovitch (!) or George Romani (I knew he was dead) or Hilda Copplestone or "Mousie" Goetz—if any of you know their whereabouts, please contact me! But the Big Surprise was Bill Hogan, who reminded me that in the early thirties he and the late James Nicholson (the guiding light behind the AIP sci-fi and Poe pix of the sixties) and I had had a little correspondence club known as the Junior Science Association. (It started out as the Boy's Scientific Club under my aegis, but transformed to the JSA under Nicholson's direction.) I am keeping my fingers crossed—altho I can't type very well that way—that Bill may be able to dig up some copies of the hektographed club organ of the BSA, *The Meteor*, or the mimeographed maglets of the JSA.

The other experience was being taken to Iowa to an Amish settlement: no automobiles, no electricity, no television, no

movies, no VCRs! Like I fe a hundred years or more ago! The inhabitants disdain color and dress uniformly in black & white. My sci-fi friend, magician Lincoln Bond, would be right at home there as he is one of about eight individuals in the United States who see everything in black & white! He's really color-blind and when he was one of my secretaries for awhile it would be embarrassing when I'd say without thinking, "Oh, Linc, will you bring me that red poster over there?"

At Icon 23 I was the fan guest of honor, together with Canadian author

Barnes & Noble, where a crowd of fans offered me copies of my *Ackermanthology* and *FJA'S World of Science Fiction* to sign. In addition, I told them tales of my Ackersperiences with HG Wells and Edgar Rice Burroughs, of my pioneering of author David H. Keller (who refused to learn English as a child and created a language all his own, which he taught to his sister), of my relationship with Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Vincent Price, et al. At Icon I was surprised to find that I was scheduled to be on a panel about Esperanto! As it was scheduled for noon on Sunday—lunchtime and checkout time—

I presumed we'd be lucky to have an audience of three, but lo! and behold, there were about 25 interested fans! My cospeaker knew Esperanto expertly and was even teaching it to his darling little "filino" (daughter).

In Idaho, my liaison Byron Stump took me to the Haunted Bookshop where believe it or not, I found another copy of *Dracula* to add to the 250 already in my collection. Artist Dennis Lynch presented me with a humorous color montage of myself surrounded by King Kong, the Invisible Man, Frankenstein, Ultima Futura Automaton, and other genre icons. The con itself presented me with a beautiful metallic statuette of Vampirella, created by Byron Stump. A visit to the home of Dennis Lynch was rewarding for me as I admired his immense collection of sci-fi and horror books. Looking thru his numerous clippings on METROPOLIS, I discovered one I didn't have, despite collecting on my favorite scientific film since 1927. He generously volunteered to make a copy (Xerox copy) for me. He also is making a color Xerox for me of a piece of sheet music from the 1910s entitled "A Maid of Mars." My cup runneth over in Iowa City and previously at Reznhedz and CONcept in Montreal I was given royal treatment. In Montreal, visiting the vast collection of fan Jean-Pierre Normand was also an additional treat; I was especially impressed by his foreign posters on Imagi-movies and first editions of Jules Verne and even Verne/Wells predecessors.



TOP: What would Forry's column be without Ultima Futura Automaton from METROPOLIS (1926). BOTTOM Dr. Mornay and Count Dracula (Lenore Aubert and Bela Lugosi) examine the Monster (Glenn Strange) in ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN (1948).

Charles DeLint, who had about five books to autograph for fans. The night before the con, I was taken to the local

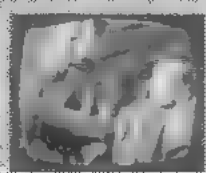


READ UNCLE FORRY IN EVERY ISSUE OF SCARLET STREET!

SCREEN...



and Screen AGAIN!



Scarlet Street's Laser Review

LOGAN'S RUN

MGM/UA

Sides One and Two CLV

Sides Three and Four CAV

\$69.95

I don't know what looks weirder, the 23rd century or the 1970s. Disco hadn't quite grabbed hold yet when LOGAN'S RUN was made, but the look of the film is distinctly seventies, from Farrah Fawcett-Majors' hair to the recreational sex (not that there's anything wrong with that!) to the blinding chrome sets. Even Jerry Goldsmith's score is slathered with the kind of digital twitters that littered all those disco versions of popular tunes.

The simple plot postulates a future that appears idyllic, yet is horrible under its polished reflecting surface. It's a world full of beautiful people who want for nothing and live free of responsibility. The price: you don't get to turn 30. This last birthday is celebrated in an arena where all the soon-to-be-fogies are levitated heavenward for a few entrancing moments, then zapped into eternity by a disco ball in the ceiling. This is the state developed, state-enforced religion of the time—a glorious youth followed by reincarnation into the same idyllic life. The reality is that it's a state-run population control scheme. In the enclosed bubble-cities of the 23rd century, zero population growth is essential: thus new citizens are bred in creches, and old citizens are summarily executed at 30. When I was in my twenties I didn't see anything wrong with this idea, but now at 41 I think I've picked out a few flaws.

Even in Utopia, there are dissidents. Some young people don't buy into the state line, and, with the big three-oh approaching, run. They are called (say it with me) "runners." To counter them, society has created an elite police force referred to as "Sandmen." There is only

one penalty for running: a Sandman executes the fugitive on sight.

Logan Five (Michael York) is a Sandman. He is chosen by the city's master computer (there had to be one) to pretend to be a runner and uncover the underground railway that's smuggling people out of the city and to the legendary Sanctuary. He takes up with young Jessica (Jenny Agutter), who is in with the underground. Together, they take off on an odyssey of discovery, from the bubble-city's hidden underground to the decimated world outside.

Some of the film's best visuals are of a deserted, vine-covered Washington, D.C. (The earlier panoramas of the bubble city miniature are terribly fake.) There

the fugitives find a crazy old hermit (Peter Ustinov, turning in a classically eccentric performance) living alone with his cats in the capital building. In him they see the face of age, and it's not something to be feared after all—though it does need to be washed. Together, they take the old man back to the city to show everybody. Naturally, this leads to a lot of explosions at the end, and the downfall of the tyrannical society.

The Collector's Edition laserdisc's extras include theatrical trailers and a brace of featurettes with behind-the-scenes scenes and interviews. Among these is an interesting short showing MGM publicity people giving their stockholders a backstage tour of LOGAN'S RUN sets under construction, touting their next big money maker. On Side Four you can step through script excerpts of deleted scenes (with some stills), preproduction art, magazine articles, costume tests (including an unused design for the Sandman uniforms), publicity shots, the press kit, newspaper ads, and text interviews with the production staff. A second audio channel treats us to a running commentary by York, director Michael Anderson, and costume designer Bil. Thomas. The movie is in a full 2.35:1 widescreen digital transfer with Dolby Digital sound.

John E. Payne

DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE

Image Entertainment

Two Sides CLV

\$34.95

"You just can't keep a good man down," chortled Warner Bros.' press campaign for their stateside distribution of DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE (1968). Fortunately, the product itself wasn't nearly as tongue-in-cheek as





the newspaper ads implied. It was the third entry in Hammer Films' Dracula series, following *HORROR OF DRACULA* (1958) and *DRACULA PRINCE OF DARKNESS* (1966).

The film's two male protagonists are both given to heavy imbibing and precious little praying. A priest (played by a dubbed Ewan Hooper) drinks to repress the horrid memory of his ineffectual encounter with vampirism. He's lost his faith and become a dullard. The younger man (Paul, played by Barry Andrews) is a collegian bon vivant who's something of a fop. When a barmaid compliments him on his "pretty" looks, he responds, "Yes, that's what I thought." For dissimilar reasons, neither of these men are blessed with the fervor of the Holy Scriptures. It will take a malevolent force to place them on the straight and narrow.

Christopher Lee's vampire is a suitable catalyst for that purpose. His imposing height and eyes (which go blood-shot whenever a victim is nearby) exhibit a formidable threat to the villagers. The Count is a startling, if seldom seen menace. Lee reportedly suffered from back problems during filming, rendering him somewhat stiff in appearance. Perhaps to compensate, he's been assigned a fair amount of dialogue. (In the previous *PRINCE OF DARKNESS*, he had hissed his way through the script—which probably represented his opinion of that screenplay.)

As usual, the female characters run the gamut from virginal curiosity (Maria, played by Veronica Carlson) to enthusiastic inclination (Zena, played by Barbara Ewing). To them, Dracula signifies an opportunity to cross thresholds normally barred by community pillars. Zena even desires additional helpings of such forbidden fruit. But she's jealously motivated by Dracula's interest in seducing Maria. (In an effective touch, the blood-

shot intensity leaves the vampire's eyes when he approaches Maria.)

DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE, while not the apex of the Hammer series, still elicits a few chills. It also, however, bends the rules a bit. When the priest initially glimpses the resurrected Count, he catches sight of his reflection in water—mythically, a vampire casts no reflection. When Dracula is impaled near the story's conclusion, he's able to extract the stake from his own chest, since neither the priest nor the hedonistic Paul have the ability to utter the holy words that would have sealed the ceremony. That plot device seems to be an embellishment. A stake through the monster's heart should have sufficed (according to everything I hold dear).

Resultingly, the narrative transforms into a parable. The scourge of the undead causes the priest to rediscover his faith, as well as Paul to renounce his atheism.

DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE, then, is a typically entertaining Hammer tale. Most of the cast are effective in their roles. Hooper is rather too deadpan to make the fallen priest a compelling figure. Andrews, conversely, is a jocular and convivial personality, especially in contrast with the stalwart citizens of the hamlet. While believable in his performance, he rarely gives the impression of fearing more than the rumpling of his curly hair. Rupert Davies is suitably blustery as the moral leader of the community. Hammer veteran Michael Ripper assumes his trademark proprietary role, and no one ever polished ale goblets as enthusiastically! Veronica Carlson and Barbara Ewing are adept at portraying the two women from different classes united by the vampire's attentions. Physically, however, the surrounding village itself is less than credible. It's periodically depicted in stock footage inserts that appear to have been photographed on a continent far removed from Pinewood's forests.

Image/Warner's laserdisc provides a fine showcase. The jacket claims that the film is letterboxed at 1:85-1 but the aspect ratio may be closer to the 1:76-1 European standard. Compared to the older VHS rendition, more detail is revealed at the sides, with a bit of cropping along the top. The colors are somewhat stronger than they appear on the videocassette. In particular, the blood is a denser hue of red. (It looked more like cranberry juice on the VHS.)

The print is devoid of flaws and artifacts, just as the laserdisc is devoid of any supplements. An American trailer preview would have been nice, to see if Warners had maintained the nudge nudge, wink wink "Boy, does he give a good hickey" tone that "graced" its print advertising.

—John F. Black

CARRIE
MGM Home Entertainment
Two Sides CLV
\$29.95

Stephen King's novel *Carrie* (1974) was my first horror book. I'd been a morose teenager OD-ing on Harlan Ellison's dangerous visions of life's pointlessness and man's bleak future, and thinking, "right on." I bought *Carrie* on someone's recommendation, and I was so enthralled by the story of the teen social outcast with special powers that I read it in two sittings—an unheard-of feat for my weak attention span. Here was someone I could really identify with—an awkward kid with no social skills, bad at sports, ostracized from her school's cliques, and continually razed by self-important jocks until her self image was lower than the gum on the bottom of her shoes. Unfortunately, I never developed telekinetic powers with which to vanquish my tormentors. Reality's a bitch.

In Brian DePalma's very good screen version of *CARRIE* (1976), Sissy Spacek



is cast as the title character. Though she's physically the polar opposite of the book's overweight, pimple-plagued Carrie White, Spacek uses her tiny frame and freckled face, hidden by unkempt strings of dirty-blond hair, to create a very real, honest character. From her body language, which screams "leave me alone" as she walks, always with downcast eyes and her schoolbooks clutched to her chest like body armor, to her meek, fearful voice, Spacek's Carrie is the perfect peer-frustrated adolescent.

Carrie is introduced as she is being mocked for her ineptitude in gym class, then tortured in the showers afterward by the popular girls. Amy Irving plays Sue, the princess-type, with beautiful big-eyed sincerity. Nancy Allen is delicious as Chris, the school's resident psycho bitch from hell. Pulling a week's detention for abusing their classmate, the two girls fixate on two separate paths. Sue, realizing her cruelty, seeks redemption by coercing her boyfriend,

Tommy (William Katt, with more golden curls than Shirley Temple and Roger Daltry combined), to take Carrie to the prom and make her feel important. Chris, rationalizing that the whole thing was Carrie's fault, coerces her boyfriend, Billy (John Travolta), to help her destroy Carrie White in front of everybody.

Though much was made of this being Travolta's leap from TV to film (the previous year's *THE DVFIL'S RAIN* hardly counts), his character is really not much more than a psychotic version of his street punk TV character from *WEL COME BACK, KOTTER*. It would be another year before his breakout in *SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER*. His presence in *CARRIE* did sell tickets, though, and I recall a bit of a ruckus with droves of teenyboppers trying to sneak into this R-rated film without ID.

The root of Carrie's zero self-esteem is her mother, a wailing fanatic whose reaction to her daughter's first period is to lock her in a closet to pray for forgiveness for the sins of Eve. To say that Piper Laurie holds nothing back as Mrs. White is an understatement. The book's Mrs. White reads like a wicked witch type, but Laurie gives the character a bizarre, sexy verve, making it clear that religion is her substitute for sex.

Carrie's independence asserts itself after her prom invitation, bolstered by her developing telekinetic powers. She disobeys her mother, pretties herself up, and goes to the prom. Spacek glows after her ugly duckling-to-princess makeover, and her wide-eyed wonder at being treated like a human being by Tommy is complemented by his growing realization that this mousy little dishrag of a girl actually is a person he'd like to get to know. Alas, this is a horror film, and all the hopefulness must lead to ruin. At the prom, both Sue's and Chris' plans for Carrie simultaneously come to fruition and, in a stunning denouement, literally blow up in their faces.

CARRIE is a good screen adaptation of a King novel—something very rare—and a very good DePalma film. All of the director's annoying film school tricks are present: revolving camera, agonizingly slow motion, split-screen—but here they're used to perfection. An homage to his idol, Alfred Hitchcock, is the use of a *PSYCHO*-like music cue whenever Carrie uses her powers. Piper Laurie even has a moment that evokes Norman Bates coming through that cellar door at the end of *PSYCHO*. If you're a Stephen King fan, a Brian DePalma fan, or even a Hitchcock fan who feels like slumming, *CARRIE* is a rare treasure.

—John E. Payne

THE LON CHANEY COLLECTION
MGM Home Entertainment
Four Sides CLV
\$69.95

A testament to the versatility of an actor seen more often in stills than on screen, *THE LON CHANEY COLLEC-*

TION pulls three legendary features, *HE WHO GETS SLAPPED* (1924), *THE UNHOLY THREE* (1925), and *THE UNKNOWN* (1927), from the MGM vaults. Though not representative of the horror genre, the films share a dark, troubled sensibility that partakes of the fantastic.

In Victor Seastrom's *HE WHO GETS SLAPPED*, Chaney plays Paul Beaumont, a scientist whose life's work and wife are stolen by a duplicitous benefactor, Baron Regnard. Devastated, Beaumont finds a new identity as *HE Who Gets Slapped*, a circus clown whose routine consists of subjecting himself to humiliation and physical abuse. A refined scholar becomes a tragic clown, a fool whose pain is invisible to others. When Regnard wanders into the circus, the fool is transformed into a fury. In his harlequin guise, Chaney can act as an agent of chaos, free to wreak his vengeance. The story's premise has only gained resonance over time, with contemporary awareness of the way victims internalize and reenact their abuse.

Adapted from a play by Leonid Andreyev, *HE WHO GETS SLAPPED* melds symbolic imagery and melodrama into a deeply moving work of art. To experience *HE* is to bear witness to the full power of the silent cinema. An intensely lyrical music-and-effects track underscores the air of futility, false merriment, and loss that pervades the film. The use of some of the same cues in *THE UNHOLY THREE* suggests both are tracked with library music, albeit with craft and sensitivity.

Victor Seastrom was the Hollywood pseudonym of actor/director Victor Sjöström, a luminary of the early Scandinavian cinema who directed nine features for MGM before returning to Sweden in 1928. In his screen swan song, Sjöström played the aged professor in Ingmar Bergman's *WILD STRAWBERRIES* (1957).

Respectively the third and sixth of Tod Browning and Lon Chaney's 10 collaborations between 1919 and 1929, *THE UNHOLY THREE* and *THE UNKNOWN* abet the growing consensus that Browning's true métier was a sort of shadeshow. Grand Guignol far removed from the fictive European settings and Gothic atmosphere of his better-known fright films *DRACULA* (1931) and *MARK OF THE VAMPIRE* (1935).

Based on a best-seller by Tod Robbins (whose "Spurs" inspired Browning's 1932 film *FREAKS*), *THE UNHOLY THREE* finds the director in top storytelling form, until a sentimental final reel compromises the wanton contempt for morality that suffuses the film. Here we find a weirdly archetypal criminal trio of dime museum performers: Tweedledee (Harry Earles of *FREAKS*), a cruel mad-guy disguised as a baby; Echo (Chaney), a ventriloquist who affects the appearance of an old woman; and Hercules (Victor McLaglen), a strongman. Chaney is underutilized in a stock tough-guy part,

laced with some geriatric cross-dressing that anticipates Lionel Barrymore's role in Browning's *THE DEVIL DOLL* (1935). Though a film featuring a ventriloquist was a natural for a sound remake,



Browning's original surpasses Jack Conway's 1930 version by the power of its lurid, ironic tone.

Once considered a lost film, *THE UNKNOWN* languished for years in a French archive, where a literal interpretation of the title resulted in it being shelved with unidentified films. *THE UNKNOWN*'s presentation doesn't meet the standard of the other two films in the collection; a cheesy electronic soundtrack brings to mind the low-rent scoring of public domain video, and the new title cards sport dialogue so graceless it appears to have been translated back from a foreign language source.

Chaney plays Alonzo the Armless, a gypsy circus performer who keeps his upper limbs concealed in a torso harness, capitalizing on the dexterity of his feet in a knife-throwing/sharpshooting act. Alonzo secretly pines for the love of the circus owner's daughter, Nanon (played by an eminently desirable but barely recognizable 18-year-old Joan Crawford), who suffers from a phobic aversion to being touched by men. Alonzo mistakes her compassion for his (fraudulent) handicap for romantic attraction, and fears that discovery of his true condition will destroy his chances with her. A misbegotten plan to win Nanon's heart and beat a murder rap triggers a series of events culminating in a bizarrely violent climax.

As in the later *FREAKS*, Browning's favored traveling circus milieu constitutes a marginal world, unbounded by the conventions of mainstream society. Here, hands become the objects of a young woman's fear, while disfigurement is cultivated as a sexually attractive attribute. *THE UNKNOWN* gradually unveils itself as a perverse "Gift of

the Magi," a morally inverse parable that makes FREAKS' revenge plot seem positively wholesome.

While Joan Crawford's performance is undistinguished, the actress later described the transforming effect of her encounter with Chaney: "Lon Chaney was my introduction to acting. This concentration, the complete absorption he gave to his characterization filled me with such awe I could scarcely speak to him... Watching him gave me the desire to become a real actress." Indeed, the distinctive attributes of Chaney's performance—the knitted brow, the eyes glowering with inner torment, the lips pursed as if to contain a torrent of emotion—were to become the trademarks of Crawford's screen persona.

Though the camerawork and staging are typical of Browning's often lackluster visuals, the story unfolds with singular momentum, and Chaney's frequent closeups always serve the narrative. In *Hollywood Gothic* (1990), David Skal attributes Browning's career-long propensity for slipshod execution of powerful material to the director's alcoholism, which led to his being blacklisted for two years in the early twenties. Despite the sauce, Browning managed to outlive Chaney by 32 years, meeting his maker in 1962.

All three films are astonishingly well preserved; missing frames, splices, and reel change marks comprise the only significant damage. These blemishes would go unnoticed if the prints weren't so otherwise pristine. While *HE WHO GETS SLAPPED* isn't as razor-sharp as *THE UNKNOWN* and the tinted *THE UNHOLY THREE*, the later films are less expressively photographed. The shadowless look of *THE UNKNOWN* and *THE UNHOLY THREE* is symptomatic of an MGM policy that prohibited low-key lighting, so that the studio's pictures would read well even in poorly equipped theaters.

An attractive gatefold sleeve includes poster art, rare photographs, and notes by Michael F. Blake, author of three books on Chaney. The films are chronologically sequenced, with an unobtrusive disc change midway through *THE UNHOLY THREE*. With a 49-minute running time, *THE UNKNOWN* occupies side 4 without interruption.

THE LON CHANEY COLLECTION is a tribute worthy of the man Orson Welles called the silent screen's greatest tragic actor.

Michael Draine

**THE KENNEL MURDER CASE/
SANTA FE TRAIL.**
The Roan Group
Four Sides CLV/CAV
\$69.95

Philo Vance is possibly the most confusing of all modern detective series in that no single studio or star is definitively associated with S.S. Van Dine's dapper sleuth. Over the years, Vance

was portrayed by William Powell, Basil Rathbone, Warren William, Edmund Lowe, Paul Lukas, Wilfrid Hyde White (in a singular British production), and Alan Curtis for studios ranging from Paramount and MGM to PRC. Powell originated the screen Vance in Paramount's *THE CANARY MURDER CASE* (1929), a stodgy affair that was supposedly compromised by being hastily revamped as a talkie. (Anyone familiar with the plot cannot but wonder how the story worked at all as a silent picture.) The film was sufficiently popular to spawn two superior Paramount/Powell follow-ups: *THE GREENE MURDER CASE* and *THE BENSON MURDER CASE* (both 1930), not to mention Powell's stint as Vance in the "Murder Will Out" sketch in *PARAMOUNT ON PARADE* (also 1930). MGM then came out with its Vance in the person of Basil Rathbone in the strikingly eerie *BISHOP MURDER CASE* (1930), which was not sufficiently popular to warrant a sequel. The character disappeared from the silver screen for three years until Warner Bros. brought Powell back for *THE KENNEL MURDER CASE* (1933), which is generally considered the best Vance picture, thanks in no small measure to the inventive direction of Michael Curtiz. While lacking the elaborate production values of the earlier Paramount and Metro films, it is undoubtedly the most cleverly made of all Philo Vance's screen adventures. And that is both its delight and its curse.

Warner Bros. house director Michael Curtiz seemed to have been everywhere at the studio during the early thirties (in 1933 he is credited with no less than seven films, including this one and *MYSTERY OF THE WAX MUSEUM*), handling virtually any assignment—and any kind of film—he was given. There is no very clear-cut pattern to his work, except to note that he seemed to bring an extra touch of stylishness to projects that engaged his interests. In *THE KENNEL MURDER CASE*, his sense of style was in its fullest expression. His sense of innovation might be said to have run wild. In an outburst of unbridled creativity, Curtiz threw in every device then known to film: brilliant use of moving camera, subjective camera, split-screen, fancy opticals, swish pans, model work, and even a rare early use of the zoom shot. The sheer panache with which he applies all these techniques is in itself amazing and almost alarming—as if Curtiz were drunk on the sheer power of the tools at his command. The results are constantly entertaining and engaging. It is every inch a fun picture, with something to delight the film buff at every turn. Somewhere along the way, however, Curtiz overlooked something in his flood of style and technical jiggery-pokery—atmosphere. (There are perhaps two genuinely atmospheric moments in the film—one of them in a brief pre-credit sequence!) *THE KEN-*

NEL MURDER CASE is certainly more intricately and cleverly made than its predecessors, but it completely lacks the almost "old dark house" mood of those earlier, less adventurous, entries.

The script is an almost flawless example of this particular style of mystery. Improbably antagonistic and objectionable Archer Coe (Robert Barrat) spends the first 15 minutes of the film just begging for someone (even Vance!) to bump him off. He is rude (to put it mildly) to his ward (Mary Astor), his mistress (Helena Vinson), his secretary (Ralph Morgan), a dog-show competitor (Paul Cavanaugh), his brother (Frank Conroy), a buyer for his collection of rare Chinese art works (Jack LaRue), his butler (Arthur Hohl), and even his cook and resident Chinese art expert (James Lee). A worthier candidate for corpseedom may never have existed in the history of film! The police, headed by District Attorney Markham (crusty Robert McWade replacing the earlier films' urbane E. H. Calvert) and Sergeant Heath (Eugene Palette), are all set to accept a suicide theory until Vance steps in and proves otherwise, leading them on a circuitous path through a second murder, a wounded Doberman Pinscher (Powell's delivery of the line, "This dog has been dealt a nasty blow" is alone worth the price of the film), and an attempted murder, to a solution involving the use of miniatures, elaborate business with pins and strings for creating a "locked room" puzzler, and the usual showy Vance techniques. The highlight is almost certainly Vance's reconstruction of the



crime—presented in the then fairly fresh technique of a flashback with a voice-over and the use of subjective camera to keep the murderer's identity a secret—but it's all terrific fun, a by-the-numbers compendium of a thirties whodunit raised to another level by being "just a little more so." Powell, who was about to move up in the world and obliterate his association with Philo Vance by becoming Nick Charles, is a fine, if slightly too likable, Vance (more than in his earlier performance. Powell's own personality shows through), and it's a treat to see him make his farewell appearance as the sleuth in such a pleasurable film.

The Roan laserdisc release of *THE KENNEL MURDER CASE* is fine, though it could perhaps have done with a little more contrast. Nonetheless, it is easily

the best looking presentation the film has had in years, and if it isn't as much of a revelation as some of their other releases (you won't get the sense of never having seen the film before that accompanied *WHITE ZOMBIE*, for instance), it's still a fine addition to their collection. The side change follows a great Eugene Palette line and Side Two, which includes the fascinating flashback scene, is in CAV for anyone inclined to examine it in detail. The biggest drawback is that Roan insisted on packaging it as a double feature with 1940's Errol Flynn Western *SANTA FE TRAIL*, on the somewhat dubious pretext as being a pair of "Michael Curtiz Classics." While both are certainly directed by Curtiz, it stretches a point to think that collectors of mystery classics are necessarily devotees of Westerns, too, and vice versa. *SANTA FE TRAIL*, presented in sepia, looks to be a solid transfer, but Westerns are not my dish of tea, while the kind of horror present in one that features Ronald Reagan as General Custer is something I leave to others.

—Ken Hanke

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE
MGM Home Entertainment
Two Sides CLV
\$39.95

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE (1963) is only the second James Bond film, but it still stands as one of the best. *RUSSIA* doesn't have the gadgetry that would be a hallmark of later films (though it does mark Desmond Llewelyn's first appearance as Q), nor a special car with deadly accessories. The film is lavishly scenic in its Turkish locations and generous with its bodacious Bond Girls, but there is none of the spectacle typical of the closing battles in *YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE* (1967), *THE SPY WHO LOVED ME* (1977), et al. And that's why I like it so much—*FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE* is just a really good, straightforward spy movie.

S.P.E.C.T.R.E., the evil spy organization bent on world domination headed by a mysterious man with a fluffy white pussy, wants to get its hands on a Russian "Lector" decoder device. To this end, they recruit beautiful Russian operative Tatiana Romanova (Daniela Bianchi) and deceive her into thinking she's serving her own country. Unknown to Tatiana, her boss Colonel Rosa Klebb (Lotte Lenya in a classically evil performance) has gone over to S.P.E.C.T.R.E. Tatiana thinks she's using the Lector as bait to trap British agent James Bond. She is instructed to pretend to have fallen in love with 007's picture in a KGB file, and to defect to be with him, offering the Lector as proof of her sincerity. But S.P.E.C.T.R.E. is playing one side against the other in order to get the decoding device and kill Bond.

Bond's guide through the Turkish underground—literally, as they paddle through subterranean rivers—is the

jocular Kharim Bey (Pedro Armendarz), a man who truly loves his job and shares Bond's hobby of freeing women from their clothing at every opportunity. Armendarz brings a lighthearted joy to the piece. In direct contrast to Bey's humor is one of the most believable, realistic Bond villains, Grant, portrayed with stoic malevolence by Robert Shaw. Following Bond from the shadows, making sure that he gets the Lector and that the trap is sprung, Grant hovers ominously and says barely a word until the final showdown in a compartment on the Orient Express. The fight that ensues is the dramatic centerpiece of the film, and the prototype for the similar (but sillier) scene in Roger Moore's *THE SPY WHO LOVED ME*.

This new digitally transferred laserdisc gives us an immaculate print in 1.66:1 widescreen format on a single disc. THX digital sound cleanly reproduces one of John Barry's best Bond scores. Chapter stops are listed on the jacket, which pictures Connery holding a nasty-looking pistol (it's really only a BB-gun, folks) with lotsa flame in the background.

John E. Payne

AGATHA
Image
Two Sides CLV
\$34.95

Generally speaking, Michael Apted's movies do not do all that much for me. I find his style terrifically bland and his choice of subject matter at odds with my own interests—but his 1978 movie, *AGATHA*, from a clever screenplay by Kathleen Tynan and Arthur Hopcraft, is another matter altogether. In 1926, at the height of her first huge success, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, mystery writer Agatha Christie disappeared for 11 days—a disappearance that has never been explained and about which Christie herself never chose to speak. The film uses this real-life mystery as a springboard for a sort of *roman à clef* affair, putting forth a workable, but farfetched and improbably romantic solution to the mystery, that is strangely satisfying. It isn't satisfying because it's believable. (It isn't.) It's satisfying because it's apt—it's the sort of solution one could only hope might be true. It's the solution that should be true.

Essentially, the story has it that Agatha Christie (Vanessa Redgrave) is in such a state of despair over her husband's (Timothy Dalton) affair with his secretary, Nancy Neele (Celia Gregory), that she follows



the object of her husband's affections to a health spa in Harrogate with dubious motives (that I will not spoil for the uninitiated) in mind. On her trail is a famous American journalist, Wally Stanton (Dustin Hoffman), who himself becomes involved with Agatha, ultimately falling in love with her and suppressing the story of what really happened in the bargain. At bottom, *AGATHA* isn't really so much a film about plot—it's about mood and atmosphere. *AGATHA* attempts to recreate a time and offer a portrait of the writer that at least affords the illusion of reality, and to a great extent, it succeeds.

The film is amazingly leisurely in its pacing, making it anything but the material for a popular success. Everything about it is subdued—even the normally two-fisted acting style of Dustin Hoffman is tightly held in check—and the film seems to exist more as a series of beautifully haunting images than as high drama. This somewhat unorthodox approach to storytelling is very much in



the film's favor, since it imbues the unlikely plot with a weightiness it would otherwise lack. We actually seem to be inhabiting the world of the film in all its little touches—touches that linger in the memory long after the story itself has all but been forgotten. Few films consist so entirely of strikingly unforgettable images as *AGATHA*. Some of them—a breathtaking shot of Dustin Hoffman in a restaurant done with natural light flooding the room from a window, for example—are inessential to the story. Others are more to the point—a beautiful moment when Stanton surprises Agatha in a cemetery and asks if she's attracted by scenes of violence ("I don't think so. I hope not—some way I must be."), with Agatha looking back at him, her face partly obscured by her coat collar and a knit hat, focusing our attention on her haunted blue eyes; a moving bit in which an overly emotional Agatha plays and sings "They Didn't Believe Me" with the hotel trio—and all add up to an unforgettable whole that is at once impossible to hold onto and equally impossible to release.

Just where the credit for *AGATHA*'s unique tone belongs is difficult to say. The movie isn't much like anything else Michael Apted ever made. It would seem to have more to do with the gorgeous production (and presumably costume, since no costume designer is credited) design of Shirley Russell (her first project following her divorce, both personally and professionally, from her filmmaker husband, Ken Russell) and the overwhelmingly beautiful camera work of Bernardo Bertolucci's ace cinematographer, Vittorio Storaro, not to mention the moody score of composer Johnny Mandel (One could have done without the seemingly obligatory theme song, "Close Enough for Love," over the ending credits.) However, Apted must come in for his share of the praise, since it was he who used these designs and images and sounds to achieve the film that we see—a film very worth having and treasuring, though not one that is likely to be to everyone's taste, owing to its deliberate pacing.

The Image/Warner laserdisc presents *AGATHA* exactly as it should be seen, in a nearly perfect 1.85:1 transfer that meticulously preserves the film's all-important imagery. (A nice plus is the fact that the presentation includes the original black and red Warner Bros. logo in use at the time of the film's release.) The side change is perfectly logical and thankfully occurs between scenes, not damaging the film's mood.

—Ken Hanke

THE WRONG BOX
Columbia TriStar
Two Sides CLV
\$34.95

A tontine full of money, a dozen people, and some dead bodies. Sound like the makings of a deliciously diabolical

comedy? You're right. If anything, Bryan Forbes' brilliant 1966 film *THE WRONG BOX* is diabolical and disturbing. It's also funny as hell.

A tontine is basically a bet in which parents put money into a trust for the ultimate benefit of their children. As the children grow, the money collects interest. Whichever child lives the longest



wins the jackpot. This particular contest comes down to two elderly brothers, one of whom (John Mills) is seriously ill and cared for by his grandson (Michael Caine). The other brother (Ralph Richardson) is healthy enough, but is pampered to death by his two nephews (Peter Cook and Dudley Moore), who will go to any length to keep him alive. Mistaken identities and switched bodies serve as a catalyst for the film's main action: If it can be made to appear that the healthy brother died first, hundreds of thousands of pounds will go to the nephews.

The screenplay comes from Larry Gelbart and Burt Shevelove (who had both won Tony awards for writing the book of *A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM*), and is taken from a Robert Louis Stevenson novel originally published in 1887. The Victorian setting adds immense depth to this tale of human greed, set during a period when the average London citizen had about as much moral fire as a turtle. Bryan Forbes, who would go on to direct *THE STEPFORD WIVES* nine years later, handles the directing task with considerable deftness, keeping the action moving along as crisply as the richly textured period costumes designed by Julie Harris.

Forbes (who had previously directed 1964's *SEANCE ON A WET AFTERNOON*) assembles an all-star cast that carries the production through to its hysterical conclusion. Caine, Mills, Richardson, Cook, Moore, Wilfred Lawson (memorably portraying the world's slowest butler), Peter Sellers (as the cat-loving

Dr. Pratt), and Nanette Newman all turn in worthy performances. Gerry Turpin's colorful cinematography works a charm, as does the wonderful music score by John Barry.

The disc is presented as part of the Columbia Classics series and features a full-frame transfer of the film. The source print used appears to be the same print carried by Kit-Parker films some years ago. There are some minor glitches and scratches toward the end of reels, but the digitally mastered picture is colorful and rich overall. The film is presented in CLV format and is thoroughly indexed at 44 chapter stops. There are no extras on the single disc.

Brooke Perry

SUNRISE:
A SONG OF TWO HUMANS
20th Century Fox
Two Sides CLV
\$49.95

I have just been blown away by a 71-year-old movie and no one is more surprised than I am by this fact. Even though I had known of F.W. Murnau's *SUNRISE* from my pre-high school years and had been intrigued by stills from it and fascinated by the stories of its amazing technical accomplishments, I had only once before encountered the film itself—in a VHS bootleg that was so bad I couldn't make it through more than 10 or 15 minutes of the film. I confess, too, that I didn't try that hard, either, simply because the story had always sounded... well, trite, and all I could envision from



its simple young-country-man-led astray-from-doting-wife-by-floozy from-the-city was the kind of melodramatic rubbish found in King Vidor's *OUR DAILY BREAD* (1934). Well, seeing

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David Manners

*Another Interview with
Classic Horror's Best
Loved Leading Man and
His Friends...*

by Rick McKay

November 15, 1997

Dear Rick

This is awful writing and probably unreadable script on soiled paper. But it brings so much more than can be said. First of all the writer is a 1/2 wit—maybe a 3/4 wit, but it brings excitement at having Rick to write to and to realize there is a Rick who I long to see and hear.

How long does one wait for the actual sight and hearing. Can one get a word telling it? (Before every loose screw has fallen out and left the machine useless?)

Rick, I await that first letter. I am no good at writing any more, but I await in excitement.
Silly David

I received this letter from David Manners shortly after my *Scarlet Street* interview with him hit the stands. It was soon clear to me that David would have a profound effect on my life. When Richard Valley, the publisher/editor of *Scarlet Street*, first asked me to interview the former screen actor, I hardly knew his name. The interview, published last October in SS# 26, was not an easy journey. David Manners had always been a tough subject. Sixty-five years ago, an interviewer from *Picture Play* wrote:

"Manners is very tough copy. If you ask him anything so personal as whether he enjoyed playing opposite Alice White, he'll freeze up and make you feel like a social error. I was regaled with the sad, strange tale of a woman writer who emerged from an interview with David, not only without a story, but with an inferiority complex so serious she hasn't gotten rid of it yet. 'What didn't you like about David Manners,' I asked her? 'David's manners,' she snapped."

The *Scarlet Street* interview was a great challenge and became, as David Colton of *USA Today* wrote, "a set piece in a drawing room drama where everyone is a suspect and the man in the wheelchair holds all the cards . . . as both men spend two days parrying with the skills of gentlemen." The experience had a profound effect on me and, realizing that David Manners loved the company of active minds, I wanted to keep in touch with him. When Richard Valley learned of our growing friendship, he asked me to do a follow-up. While I warned him that Mr. Manners had talked as much as he ever intended to about "that old movie town," Richard said that readers would still like to know how he was. I had never intended to do another story about David Manners, but I decided that it might be a good excuse to do some more research and learn a bit more about the man.

Over the winter David's letters warned that, if I wanted to see him again, I had better hurry. I found them profoundly moving. Interestingly enough, as he worried about the end, his writing and images became sharper than ever.

When spring came and new projects brought me from New York to Los Angeles, I decided to take advantage of the opportunity. This time I would go a step further and interview a few of the people who had been close to David over the last 40 years and fill in those decades between his halcyon days in Hollywood and his present life. And that, dear reader, is how this article came to be.

Remembering that David was at his best in the morning, I decided to get up at an obscenely early hour and leave my Hollywood hotel behind. Traveling up the coast on Route One as the sun began to rise, I thought of David waking in the nursing home. I remembered a one-page scene that David had written a few years earlier that pretty much made clear the frustration he sometimes felt.

—Hello. How are you?
—I'm fine. How are you?

—Okay, thanks.
—You're all right?
I just said okay.
—One never knows just what okay means.
—It means all right.
—Then you're all right!
—For God's sake, yes . . . that's that!
—Some say okay when they really mean sick.
When I say okay I mean okay . . . Let's drop it.
—Well, I just wanted to know.
—Okay. So you know.
—What?
—For Christ's sake! What's the matter with you?
—I'm all right. What's your problem?
—You . . . you goat! You fucking goat!
Then you're really not okay.
—Go to hell! (Door slams.)

As I pulled into David's small coastal town, I saw the nursing home waiting on my right—but, when I entered the facility and went into his room, there was only an empty bed. I feared the worst, as you must when someone is approaching the century mark. But one of the aides soon told me that David was "at a party in the recreation room." I had forgotten it was a holiday unit. I stepped in the room and saw the dime-store foil four-leaf clovers hanging from the fluorescent light fixtures and a middle-aged volunteer playing guitar and singing "Danny Boy" in a key that was just that much too high for him. The tables were covered in green paper and the residents looked even older than before—many seemingly unaware of where they were. I girded myself and looked over the wheelchairs for David. Then I saw him, both arms gesturing wildly as he conducted the guitar player with an emerald-colored cookie in one hand and a Styrofoam cup full of green milk in the other. I felt better already. I slipped behind him and said, "Hello, David."

"My God, is it Rick?" Is that you? And the way from New York! It was not easy for him to turn around in his wheelchair, so I gave him a hug from behind. He looked well, natty in a cardigan sweater and sports shirt. I felt an enormous weight lift from my shoulders as I realized that David was totally present and happy to see me. One can never be too sure.

"How are you?" I asked.

"Well, I was lonely at the moment before you came. If there weren't so many people watching, I would give you a great big kiss!"

I smiled, happy to see he was in great form.

"I would sing for you, but the voice is gone. It goes after 40, you know," said David, as "Too Rah Loo" played in the background.

"Don't tell me you're over 90!"

"My mother said, 'You will never forget your age. It will always be the same as the year. See, I was born in 1900. Rick . . .'"

"Yes?"

"I can't see you," David said as he tried to turn around in his wheelchair.

"Well, we'll fix that," I told him and turned his chair around.

"Now, let's get out of here," he whispered slyly.

It was clear that David was delighted to have a guest and to be "sprung" from the soiree. We found a quiet corner in a hallway near a garden window and caught up. I told him about my work and he talked about the fond in the home. I was beginning to grow concerned at this vital mind's world growing smaller and smaller.

"Do you ever go out these days," I asked.

"I would like to, but I don't know how."

"What if one day we left and went outside for a while? You could take your wheelchair."

"Where?" David asked, warily.

SCARLE



LEFT: When Katharine Hepburn made her film debut in *A BILL OF DIVORCEMENT* (1932), it was in the arms of leading man David Manners. RIGHT: David was caught in the middle between Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi in *THE BLACK CAT* (1934).

"To the beach, to a shopping mall, anywhere you want to go . . ."

"Well," David said cautiously. "I don't know. See, it's a lovely idea as far as I'm concerned, but they have to be told, you know."

"Of course. I'll talk to your doctor and we'll get you out tomorrow or the next day."

David looked at me conspiratorially and then whispered: "Parole, parole!"

As we continued to talk, David asked about the "Second Acts" baseball cap I was wearing. I explained that I had included him as a chapter in a book about people with inspiring second halves of their lives. Feeling frisky, he tried the hat on.

"I've had many second acts," he reminded me.

"That's what originally attracted me to your story. Even more than your film work. I'm fascinated with you and your life in the desert at Yucca Loma."

"Oh," David lit up. "I am so glad you know Yucca Loma! For God's sake. You make it all seem wonderfully dramatic."

Laughing, I thought of the man who'd turned his back on Hollywood to move to the desert telling me that I had made his story dramatic. I noticed David's eyes closing as we sat in the hall and suggested that perhaps I should go and come back after dinner.



"Come back pretty early, because I'm one of those people who have reached the age of . . ." David feigned a snore. "I sleep, my God! I sleep when people are talking to me! My eyes get sore from just looking."

I reminded him that, as an artist, he had done a good deal of looking in his life.

"Too much. Come back," David winked. "You will find us at supper in the dining room. How long will you be here?"

"A few days. David, you must come for a visit to New York," I said optimistically, instantly realizing how completely unrealistic it was. "We could see a Broadway show."

"I think it's over, honey."

"It's not over yet. You're still here. And you know what they say, don't you? It's not over till the fat lady sings."

"Well," David said wearily, with a wry smile. "Get me one."

I couldn't help laughing, but it was also obvious that David was growing weary. I wheeled him back to his room. He was quiet on the way back.

"Do you want to lay down?" I asked, helping him out of his chair.

"I want to lie down, speaking of good English," he corrected me. He hadn't lost his touch. "Know what I really want to do?"

LEFT: It's tea time on the set of *THE BLACK CAT* with Anna Duncan, David Manners, Boris Karloff, and director Edgar G. Ulmer. RIGHT: Helen Chandler "bats" her eyes at David in *DRACULA* (1931).



"No What?"

"This," he replied, giving me a kiss on the cheek. "Now, good night, sweet prince."

It was all of 11:30 in the morning and he was exhausted. "I see you around dinner, David, okay?"

"Right O," he answered, his eyes already closed. "Goodbye."

While doing research on the first David Manners story, I met the remarkable woman whom David had lived with his last years before entering the nursing home. Marge Mason runs a "board and care" where six elderly people live in her home. It is a beautiful house and garden on a residential street in Montecito, which allows these senior members of our society to keep their freedom till the last possible moment. David had left, grudgingly, when health concerns made it necessary and still spoke of Marge at least once in every conversation. She had been nice enough to offer me the cottage on her property while I was in town.

When I arrived at her home, Marge was anxious to tell me about a local woman she had met who was a volunteer at nursing homes in her spare time. The woman had heard David's name at a nursing home and remembered her parents and grandparents speaking of him when she was younger. "She couldn't believe it was the same guy, but I assured her that it definitely was," Marge told me as she made eggs and pancakes. "She said her folks and grandparents used to go to that place of David's in the desert. What was it?"

"Rancho Yucca Loma," I answered, cautious now.

Well, she has all kinds of pictures and books and stuff you would probably want to see."

I couldn't believe it. Marge made a few phone calls and before I could finish my pancakes I was on my way to the sea shore to see Suzie Stein, who promised more clues to David's past. I had heard so much from David of the long lost Yucca Loma, that I hardly thought of it as a real place anymore. It seemed to exist more as something out of LOST HORIZON than reality.

As early as August 1934, I said to *Film Pictoria* magazine that "what I really want more than anything else in this life is to make enough money to buy a ranch and retire. There is so much work to be done on a ranch. I don't know of a more perfect relaxation than sleep after a day of hard physical labour. I prefer the simple life and simple, genuine people. People who have the courage to live naturally. There is nothing more inspiring than the earth. It gives me healthy ideas."

Even then, David knew what he wanted. Within the year *Photoplay* magazine reported that David Manners is now a partner in a thousand-acre "guest" ranch where guests and host occupy separate houses which surround, at a distance, the community living hall. The minute he finishes a picture, back he goes, over the Sierra Madre Mountains and across the Mojave Desert to his sage brush retreat."

David had talked to me at length about Yucca Loma. The desert ranch attracted legendarily guests from Einstein to Horowitz and Garbo to Gable. Whenever we talked about it, David's eyes got a faraway look and I could see the young man in the desert, 60 years ago. I wanted to know more about this desert paradise that had been his first escape from Hollywood.

Suzie Stein, a slim, pretty woman who devotes much of her time to volunteer work, welcomed me into her home

and couldn't wait to show me the photos Suzie had heard a few stories, but hoped that I could supply her with pieces of her own puzzle. She had been bitten by the same bug as I and was planning a trip with her husband to see what she could find of the old Yucca Loma. I looked through the dusty albums full of sepia-toned photos. I saw David in khakis and short sleeves, with a bandana tied rakishly around his neck. In another, he was in a sweat suit, hair blowing freely in the wind, sporting the biggest smile I had ever seen. He was 40 years old, but looked much younger and happier than in the Hollywood photos of a decade before. There were photos of Suzie's young father with a clean-shaven, open-faced Clark Gable, one guest that David didn't especially like. However, there was another photo of a guest he was mad about: the character actress Beulah Bondi, sitting on the porch of Yucca Loma. Bondi had been David's dear friend and regular visitor to the resort. David, a veteran of Universal horror films (he appeared with Karl off and Lugosi in 1935's THE INVISIBLE RAY), became a dear friend and regular visitor to the resort.

The place itself looked magical, an oasis of desert pueblos surrounded by a swimming pool and tennis court.

not another structure as far as the eye could see. You could not get any farther from Hollywood while still being only a few hours away.

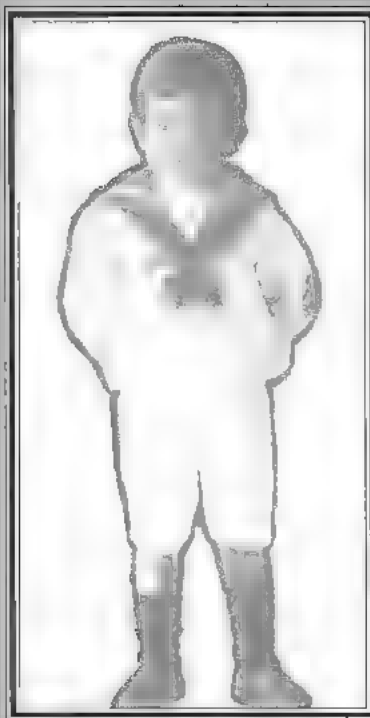
I took pictures of many of the photos to show David. Suzie even had copies of the two novels David had published. In the same far magazine article that spoke of David's exodus to Yucca Loma between pictures, David said prophetically: "I feel that I have only two or three years more in the movies. When my picture career is finished, I hope to be established as an author. But before I can I have to gain a reputation in the literary field." I had looked long and hard for David's literary efforts without success. I begged Suzie to loan the yellow books to me and she generously, if hesitantly, relinquished the signed copies that David had given her grandparents so many years before.

As I left Suzie's with the two novels, I couldn't help thinking of what David had said in 1934, two years before he left motion pictures.

"Someday, somebody will write a story about a farmer's son who leaves home for the city. He will soon learn that the city life is as shallow as many of the people he has met there, and he will go back to the farm. He will recognize the words of simple, natural, unsophisticated people. He will then appreciate the joy and goodness of the earth. And when that story is written, I want to play in it. I could really give an inspired performance of a character like that. Because it will be a parallel to my own life. It will carry out my own philosophy and ideals."

Well, not only was David soon living that life, six years later he himself wrote *Common Sense*, the story of a city boy who left the high life to go to the farm where his mother had grown up. The protagonist is I'm in love with "the simple, natural, unsophisticated people" and decided to make his life there. His second novel was *Running Laughter*. Both were powerful books, romantic and seemingly made for Hollywood to snap up. Published by Dutton, both did very well, but the WWI paper shortage put the crimp on his third novel where it came out.

I couldn't wait to show David the copies of Suzie's photos and see if they brought back any memories. I knew he would be excited to see them. I took them to a one-hour photo shop and made a quick drive back south to Los Angeles to follow up on another clue.





David Manners was obviously at his happiest far away from Hollywood, during the period he co-owned Rancho Yucca Loma. Here he is in two photographs from the early forties.

I had seen countless cards on the wall of David's room, all from the same woman. When I asked Marge Mason about her, she explained that she was David's friend and neighbor from Pacific Palisades, Maritta Woolf-Stegman. She had written quite a few novels, the most famous being *Night Train*, which had been made into the 1946 film *WHISTLE STOP* with the young Ava Gardner. She had stayed close to David, and I had yet to find anyone from that middle era of his life. I knew that David had published at least two novels at Yucca Loma and had been lured back to Broadway to star in Elia Kazan's production of the short-lived *TRUCKLINE CAFE* with a young Marlon Brando. After it closed prematurely, he was cast opposite Diana Barrymore in *HIDDEN HORIZON*, which barely lasted a few weeks. However, he was soon playing Lord Windemere in a hit production of Oscar Wilde's *LADY WINDEMERE'S FAN* on Broadway, in San Francisco, and on the national tour. He got rave reviews and was deluged with offers of contracts for Broadway and Hollywood. Instead, he returned to Yucca Loma and never acted again. It was 1947 and it now seems clear that David's last success on the legitimate stage had been enough for him. As he had told me a year before, "leaving has always been easy."

Yucca Loma had been sold in the fifties and David had moved back to Los Angeles and written inspirational books, becoming a spiritual teacher of sorts. He had been in a long-term relationship with a man named William Mercer. They had lived together some 20 years. I had heard of a brief marriage to the wealthy socialite Suzanne Bushnell in the late twenties that had been quashed by her family when he began working in films, but knew very little of Bill Mercer. Entering Los Angeles again, I couldn't help thinking that perhaps Maritta was the last person who could fill in that missing era.

I found Maritta in West Los Angeles, a sort of Soho of Southern California. She is a woman of striking individuality, with a head full of tousled blonde curls and a wide open smile that makes estimating her age impossible. Looking like an intellectual gypsy and her familiar, she and her cat greeted me at the door of her book-filled apartment in the industrial building she owns. She put on a pot of tea, while warning that she didn't think she could be of much help. She was wrong.

As soon as we sat down at her cozy kitchen table she opened up. "I met David Manners through my friends the Mullikans. Lee was David's painting teacher. David was sort of between lives, gardening and studying painting.

When I first met him, he was very handsome. He is still. He can joke about 'look at the old man,' but I still think he has an eye for how he looks. The nursing home he was in before now, he was the rage of the place. David would hold court. Those women were beside themselves. When we were first friends we all got together for tea. The Mullikans would have little tea parties, my husband and I would have little tea parties, and David and Bill would have little tea parties. David was the quiet one and Bill was the party person."

I asked Maritta who David had socialized with in those days after being a near hermit in the desert for so long.

"As long as I knew David, he was friends with George Cukor," Maritta answered, pouring our hot tea. "He and Bill would go to all of Cukor's parties. I don't know if David went to any outside of Cukor's and ours; he was not a party person. Bill was the party person; he loved parties and he was the perfect guest. Bill was the one who loved decorating the house and everything had to be arranged just so. David couldn't have cared less, but Bill did."

"I never knew where Bill actually came into David's life... whether David met him there, or brought him there, or what. I did hear that Bill was working at Yucca Loma and there was a bad accident. I don't know who was driving the car or what. I do know that David and Gwen felt very responsible for Bill. There was a long period when he was hospitalized and David and Gwen decided on their own to take him to another doctor and hospital entirely. Bill always felt that that was why he was able to walk again."

"I don't know why they ever sold that house and moved. Maybe David needed the money badly and had to sell the house in the Palisades. Who's to know? But, the move was Bill's undoing. I don't know why the new place was right in a little village where Bill could walk to little tea shops. I think it was just that moving is awful hard on someone that fragile, I think the whole move was just too much for Bill."

"David was marvelous. He kept saying 'Bill, the place we are meant to be is waiting for us. There is nothing to worry about.' But they had already sold the house and Bill was very frightened, wondering where were they to go and what was to become of them? There was a lot of stress, too, and David, with that philosophy of his, was maddeningly calm about the whole thing. He'd say, 'Bill, there's no reason for you to worry like that. The place we are meant to be is waiting for us. We just haven't found it

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LEFT: In this scene from *DRACULA* (1931), Dr. Van Helsing and Mina Seward (Edward Van Sloan and Helen Chandler) try to explain to John Harker (David Manners) that Mina has been seeing another man on the side—of her neck. RIGHT: Mina sits entranced while John tries to keep from getting tangled in bat-wires.



yet.' Just the sight of the moving! Bill was a man who liked to put the little box here and the candlesticks on the table-top there—and here were things being packed up and boxes everywhere and the whole thing was just too much for him.

"Before they moved, Bill had a few hospital stays. He had a congestive heart condition. It wasn't terribly severe, but anyway he was hospitalized. Of course, David had an aura and he was hospitalized at that point, too. Bill nearly fell apart. Somebody had to be the survivor in the relationship and it was not Bill. It was right after Christmas. I stopped by to see Bill. David was coming home in a few days and the Christmas tree was still sitting there, with most of its needles on the floor—and this had been an immaculate house, because Bill loved to clean it and loved all the things, the antiques and the silver. I said, 'Bill, you have got to do something before David comes home.' But he was just so depressed about David that he let the whole place disintegrate. He was very fragile and very amiable, but he was much more fragile than most of us thought he was at the time.

"It was never apparent. Bill was full of fun and very extroverted, very witty and always the life of the party, so it was deceptive. I don't know why David wanted to leave, but I remember he came over one day and said to me, 'I've been here too long.' I don't think Bill wanted to move. Bill was a good deal younger, hardly in his fifties when they left Pacific Palisades, but I had begun to realize that, under that party person facade, he was a rather frightened person. And moving, my husband always said, 'was what killed poor Bill. If they had stayed in the Palisades,' he would say, 'Bill would still be alive, padding along with his cane and visiting his lady friends.'

"Well, I should say this about Bill," Maritta smiled. "Bill had three or four somewhat elderly women friends. He tapped along with his cane and went to call on them. He advised them about clothes and shopping and he loved to paint pictures. He kept them all compartmentalized separately. At least a couple of them, that I know of, had absolute designs on him. They were hoping that David would die and they'd get him. Fat chance! So, he had to leave all of these women behind—and all of them, I may say, were bitter.

"After they had finally moved, Bill came down to visit his cousin and that's when I realized that Bill was really disturbed. He was not making sense. He wanted me to urge David to go on a holiday and visit friends. I later put it together that he felt himself slipping and didn't want David to see him. I delivered Bill to one of his ladies for lunch, and, strangely enough, he insisted that I stay, which did not make the lady happy because she wanted Bill all to herself.

I was very disturbed. Next thing, there was a phone call and Bill had run away and David had found him in a bus station. Well, he was hospitalized, then he was released. See, he had this heart condition. Nothing is harder on a heart condition than stress. David was devoted to him, had taken care of him for years and continued to take care of him—but within a year after the move he was dead. The center of Bill's life was David—and David, I know, was desolated when Bill died."

Maritta's cat jumped up on the table. She began to stroke him as she looked into the distance, deep in thought. "After Bill died, David moved to a new apartment. When he finally had to move into the first old folks' home, he didn't have to cook for himself any more and he just loved it. Of course, the old ladies just loved him! He really took to it. He put out a resident newspaper there and kept putting out what I called his 'guru' paper for his disciples."

I asked Maritta if David was doing the "guru" thing when they were neighbors and she laughed. "Well, I guess he was writing those books and his newsletters and sending cassettes to his following. I remember one evening when we got together at the Mulikan's. It was just Bill and David and myself and Lucia. David told us that, when he had first come to Hollywood, he'd gone to a seance kind of thing where you sit around the table, and after an hour of sitting in the dark David got bored and left. Of course, he heard afterwards that everything happened after he had gone. Well, he said we had to try this. He remembered that we had to sit and make a circle of energy with our hands. So, we sat for a while and then the table began to make cracking noises. It quivered and cracked and then began to sway. It took about 20 minutes, maybe. One whole winter we kept getting together and doing this, and we would have the table going all over the living room, running into things, bumping into people . . .

"Then we tried it at my house with a little gaming table, which was lighter and even more apt to run all over the room. Some nights we would be standing up still trying to keep our circle of hands. The table would swing in great circles. We would have to stand up, chairs tipping over. There are energies that we don't know anything about—but I don't think it was any more David than anybody else."

I asked Maritta if she had always kept in touch with David over the years. "Well, off and on. He came to see my husband and I when we had a house in Hawaii. David often thought of Hawaii. He always told me his father had gotten him a job in Hawaii and he was on his way there all those years ago, but he stopped off in Los Angeles for a week before the ship sailed and went to a party and that



LEFT: Van Helsing and Harker track Count Dracula (Bela Lugosi) to his coffin, hidden in the catacombs of Carfax Abbey. RIGHT: After having driven a stake into the heart of the Vampire King (an action tastefully performed off-camera) Van Helsing and Harker are reunited with Mina.



was the end. Someone snagged him for a movie because, of course, he was absolutely handsome. We had a house in Maui and David came out. He always said he ought to see Hawaii, because it was part of his lifeline. Bill was already gone."

I told Maritta that I had always heard that the party David had been "snagged" at was held by his friend from the New York stage, George Cukor, and that James Whale was the man he met at that party. Whale was casting *JOURNEY'S END* (1930), which became David's first film and one of his best roles. As Maritta said, it was then that David decided to skip the job in Hawaii and his young socialite wife was convinced soon after by her mother to leave David. We laughed as we thought about what a small town Hollywood had been back when Cukor had cast David in *A BILL OF DIVORCEMENT* (1932) the day David had been fired by Jack Warner. David had refused to continue being loaned out at three times his salary and Warner told him to "go to hell." David became one of the first and best paid freelance agents in Hollywood. Along with Karloff, he was also one of the first members of the Screen Actors Guild, which didn't endear him to Jack Warner, either.

"Oh, I remember when David turned 90," Maritta suddenly recalled. "A fan made him a great scrapbook. And he got Katherine Hepburn to write David a letter. She was talking about *A BILL OF DIVORCEMENT*, her first film and how David played her beau. She wrote, 'I came down the stairway and into your arms and it changed my life.'"

I asked Maritta what happened to the scrapbook. She had no idea. David had many times proudly boasted that he had "let everything go," and I suppose it's sitting in the storeroom of one of the old folks' homes he has lived in, with no one having any idea what is in it. As I was getting ready to go Maritta mentioned, as an afterthought, that David had once given her the old leather bound guest book from Yucca Loma. The researcher in me couldn't believe it. "Where is it?" I gasped. "Oh, God," she shook her head. "Somewhere around here. I'll look."

Maritta never did find the guest book, but she shared enough with me that day to fill in enormous holes in the past of the friend that I had come to care so much about. Driving back up to see David, I couldn't help picturing him and his companion Bill at one of Cukor's parties and how hard losing him must have been for David. But before I could get too sad, I laughed at the thought of a table spinning through the air as David, the guru to be, tried to hold it down. Soon I was pulling back up to the nursing home and wondering if David had finished dinner yet. I was late—but, then again, where was he going?

As I walked in, David was just coming from dinner. He seemed tired and slightly medicated for pain. I didn't want to bother him, but he wanted to know what I had done that day. He was feeling a bit frisky, in spite of stomach pains.

"Pussycat, pussycat, where have you been?" David smiled wearily. "Do you know?"

"No. Tell me."

"I've been to London to look at the Queen. What Queen? Oh, the streets are full of them," David laughed quietly, but I could tell he was in pain and not at his best.

I decided that I would try and surprise David and cheer him up. "Look what I'm going to be reading this week, David," I said as I took his two books out of my bag.

"Oh, you got them! I thought they were nonexistent!"

"I just borrowed them. I have to return them."

"Well, I'll be damned," David whispered, slowly opening one of the books. "That's fantastic. How did you do it?"

"You gave these books to the Meyers at Yucca Loma. Do you remember them?"

"My memory is itching," David said as he tried to read the inscription through a magnifying glass I'd brought along, "but I can't remember."

The books had distracted David from the pain for a moment, so I decided to bring the photos out. "Well, as long as we're back in time you might like these. Do you know this guy?"

"That's me. And look, there's Beulah! How's that for a sudden memory? Beulah Bondi."

"Did she come to Yucca Loma?"

"Did she come?" David looked up incredulously. "Does rain come out of a black cloud? She was marvelous. She was great. She was everything. Beulah . . ."

"Do you know this one?"

"Oh, my God. It's Gwen. My God—it's wonderful!"

"She was your friend at Yucca Loma; her mother owned it. Tell me about Gwen."

"Oh, she's a book in herself."

"How did you meet her?"

"Through a son of a bitch. A bastard took me up there the first time to Yucca Loma. Oh, this photo is marvelous!"

"Who was the bastard?"

"I don't remember," David said cagily. "God, these pictures are doing me in."

I decided to show him one more before he was too tired. "You know this one,"

"Who is it?"

"That's you!"

Continued on page 68

Natural Wonders

Marilyn Monroe and Niagara

When Marilyn Monroe began filming *NIAGARA* in June of 1952, she was quivering on the launching pad of super stardom. She had already achieved fame, even notoriety. She had struggled through the bit roles, the walk-ons, the B films, and had started to carve out the dumb-blonde sex symbol that would become her hallmark and her curse. There was a new man in her life, and she held firmly within her grasp the coveted role of Lorelei Lee in the upcoming film version of the Broadway musical hit, *GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES*—a role originally intended for her onetime mentor, Betty Grable.



by C. M. Douglas

Several of NIAGARA's surviving cast members gathered recently at the inauguration of the Niagara Film Festival to remember the girl who became an icon and to reminisce about the making of this, Marilyn's only true film noir. They came from different lives and from different parts of the country—Max Showalter (aka Casey Adams) from Chester, Connecticut, having just sold his New York City townhouse; Henry Beckman, a longtime resident of Hollywood; Richard Allan, who lives in happy retirement in Louisville, Kentucky; and Harry Carey Jr., from Durango, Colorado, as befits the Western star son of a Western star.

She was still a starlet, they remember, but one the public definitely recognized. If they did not know her from her film appearances, they knew her from the furor created by the revelation that she was the beautiful nude adorning the "Golden Dreams" calendars of 1951 and 1952. When asked what she had on, she alternately answered "the radio" or "Chanel No. 5." She laughed at the situation, which in those sensitive times would have destroyed most budding careers. But when she added that she took the work because she was hungry, the public forgave her and the nude photographs added to her allure. She was a starlet, yes, but she had enormous power—power she had acquired the old-fashioned way. Marilyn had worked hard, wisely, and diligently, climbing from foster homes and relative poverty, using her innate survival instinct, and her body when necessary, for the opportunity NIAGARA afforded her—the opportunity to carry a major acting role in an A-quality film to be photographed in glorious Technicolor. Her one previous brush with color had been an obscure color screen test and a bit part as a chorus girl in a Dan Dailey semi-musical Western, *A TICKET TO TOMAHAWK* (1950). She had carried supporting roles in such films as *LOVE NEST* (1951), *LET'S MAKE IT LEGAL* (1951), *MONKEY BUSINESS* (1952), and *O. HENRY'S FULL HOUSE* (1952), in the latter playing a prostitute opposite the imposing thespian, Charles Laughton. But she had scored her most provocative bull's-eye playing a series of steamy sirens, including the kept girl in *THE ASPHALT JUNGLE* (1950) under the direction of John Huston, the litera. walk-on and walk off in the Marx Bros' *LOVE HAPPY* (1949) ("You've got the best ass in the

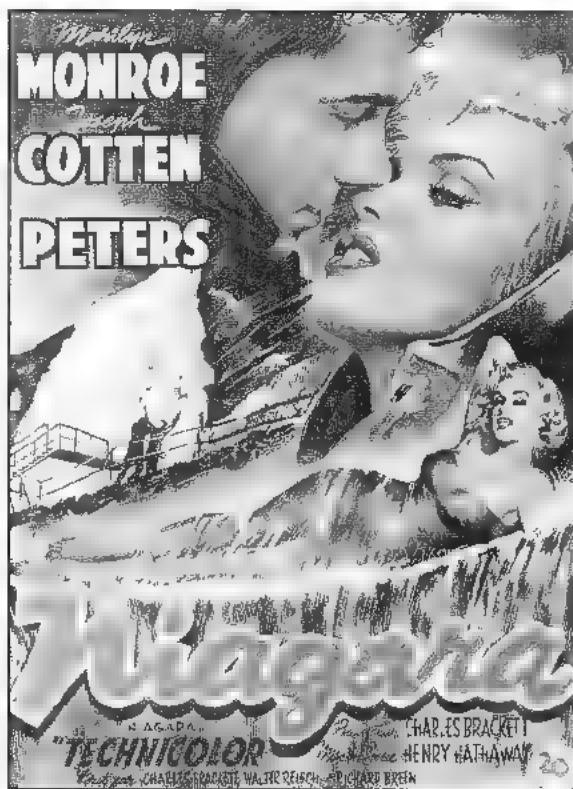
business," Groucho told her), and the starlet with a eye to the future in the classic *ALL ABOUT EVE* (1950). Each role had been a deft, individual creation. Even the dumb-blond types she played in *LOVE HAPPY* and *ALL ABOUT EVE* were individualized—the former a sensual cartoon for sensuality's sake and the latter a career climber with a subtle sense of purpose marked by an obvious sexual attitude. While the critics had not generally found favor with her performance as the psychotic baby sitter in *DON'T BOTHER TO KNOCK* (1952), finding her out of her depth, she had, even the year before, posed a threat to

veteran star Paul Douglas while filming *CLASH BY NIGHT* (1952). "Why the hell don't these photographers take any pictures of us?" he had bellowed to costar Barbara Stanwyck. "It's always that god-damn blonde bitch?"

Now, as she prepared to film NIAGARA, Marilyn could put those days behind her. In addition to a Hitchcockian script written by Charles Brackett, Richard Breen, and Walter Reisch, she had Joseph Cotten and Jean Peters as costars. For good measure, she had in tow her acting coach, Natasha Lytess. Henry Hathaway was set as director, and he was known for casting his films with the best talent available. He regularly scoured the papers reading stage reviews. For NIAGARA, he imported Denis O'Day from Ireland's famed Abbey Theatre and Richard Collins, who had won excellent notices on Broadway in the stage adaptation of Truman Capote's 1951 novel *The Grass Harp*.

Hathaway was a director with a considerable Hollywood pedigree. His mother had been an actress and his father a stage manager. He had been a child actor at the age of 10, later becoming an assistant director for films including the legendary 1927 silent version of *BEN HUR*. His reputation was established in a variety of genres, but with an emphasis on Westerns, crime dramas, and action stories—all of which would come into play in NIAGARA.

Unfortunately, Hathaway had a sadistic streak that surfaced quickly during shooting. Max Showalter, acting under the name Casey Adams—a name the studio insisted he adopt, fearing his real name be deemed "too German" following the war—remembers his encounter. "I was the original whipping boy, since this was the first big role I'd played. A scene with Jean Peters required three takes, and



The Niagara Film Festival

The first annual Niagara Film Festival was held June 5-14, 1998. Founded by John VonKooten, Amy Bignucolo, and Gary Hendershot and organized by Cam Haynes of the Toronto Film Festival, the 10-day celebration featured a series of horror films, disaster epics, creature features, and Canadian films, as well as the tribute to Marilyn Monroe. Opening night saluted Niagara Falls area native James Cameron, with Cameron on hand to screen *TITANIC* at Niagara's Imax Theatre. Horror film screenings featuring "spine tingling shock classics in the retro spirit of the B-movie" were held in locations that ranged from the Velvet Room of The Seneca Disco to the eerie loft of the Castlerock Nightclub. Among the

films scheduled were *CARNIVAL OF SOULS* (1962), *DEATH SHIP* (1980), *DR. FRANKENSTEIN ON CAMPUS* (1970) and *THE HAUNTING* (1963). Other celebrities in attendance throughout the festival included Jane Russell, Don Murray, Eileen Heckart, Sheila (Mrs. Irwin) Allen, Stella Stevens, Trudy Young, and Evelyn Keyes. In all, the festival presented a schedule of over 37 films, a series of parties, an amateur film contest, a photo show, and a Marilyn Monroe memorabilia auction.

And what's on the agenda for next year? President and Founder John VonKooten comments: "It's too early to say, but remember Christopher Reeve flew over Niagara Falls in *SUPERMAN*."

—C.M. Douglas



LEFT: Jean Peters and Casey Adams played the young marrieds visiting NIAGARA (1953) who become embroiled in Rose Loomis' plot to kill hubby George (Joseph Cotten). Why does George deserve annihilation? Could it be because his wife looks like Marilyn Monroe and he prefers to make model boats? **RIGHT:** Casey Adams (or Max Showalter, as he is better known) was reunited with costar Richard Allan at the Niagara Film Festival

Hathaway verbally attacked me. I'd never been called such names." Later, Hathaway turned his temper to Denis O'Day and Richard Collins. Harry Carey and Henry Beckman remember Hathaway's prized stage actors trembling with fear. Then, Carey recalls, Hathaway would say, "Oh, go home and quiet down." But Carey, Beckman, and Richard Allan also found in Hathaway a gentler nature.

Carey remembers Hathaway's kindness in casting him. "I had signed with a major agency, which was asking so much for my services that I hadn't worked for four months. I had gone to Hathaway's office to say hello, as he had done films with my father." When Hathaway inquired as to what Carey was up to, Carey told him of his problems getting work. "No wonder," Hathaway railed. "You're asking the same salary as Karl Malden, and Malden has a goddamn Academy Award!" On the spot he cast Carey in a bit role as a cab driver.

"My role was so small it only took a half hour to film, but he kept yelling at Marilyn. 'Keep your head in the window! The audience doesn't need to see your tits! They know you got tits!'"

Beckman was at a cattle call when he learned Hathaway was looking for Canadians who could ride motorcycles. He landed the role with a six-word line: "They're headed straight for the current." The line required three

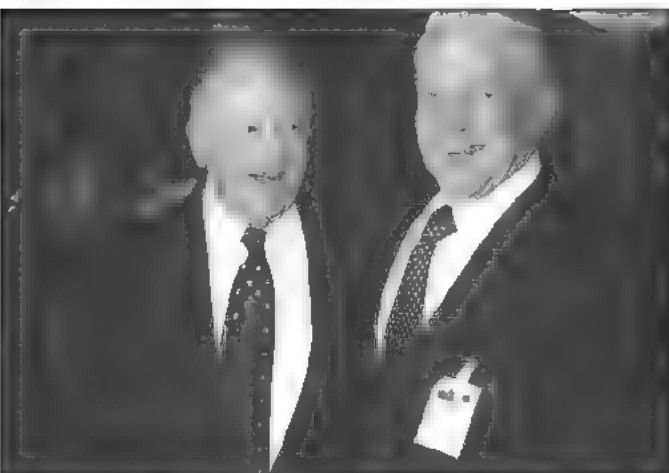


Photo: Tom Gates

takes with Hathaway telling Beckman, "Don't try to underact. The only actor who can underact is Spencer Tracy and him you ain't."

Richard Allan had been spotted by producer Darryl Zanuck in a sizzling musical number with Susan Hayward in *WITH A SONG IN MY HEART* (1952), the same film that landed Max Showalter his role in *NIAGARA*. A stand-in for Montgomery Clift, Allan was as handsome as any leading man in Hollywood. On Zanuck's orders, he joined the cast of *NIAGARA* as Monroe's doomed lover after completion of his work on *THE SNOWS OF KILIMANJARO* (1952). Allan's scene in which he kissed Marilyn also required multiple takes. "Passionately! I want you to kiss her passionately," Hathaway told Allan. "When I did the scene, Hathaway yelled, 'Cut! Jesus Christ, I can't print that.'" Allan responded, "Mr. Hathaway, won't you show me how you should like Miss Monroe kissed?" Hathaway complied. "I knew he wanted to kiss her," Allan laughs.

But Monroe would rebel against Hathaway's tyranny, as would Max Showalter. Showalter, a good-looking Kansas-born all-American with Robert Cummings shadings, had appeared on Broadway as well as in the films *ALWAYS LEAVE THEM LAUGHING* (1949), *WITH A SONG IN MY HEART*, and *WHAT PRICE GLORY?* (1952). When Hath

Continued on page 36

LEFT: Harry Carey Jr. had a small role in *NIAGARA*, thanks to director Henry Hathaway. **CENTER:** Richard Allan is best known for his role as Marilyn Monroe's lover. **RIGHT:** Allan and Carey met up with another *NIAGARA* alumnus, Henry Beckman, at the festival. **PAGE 36:** Marilyn Monroe's famous calendar pose is still a stunner.

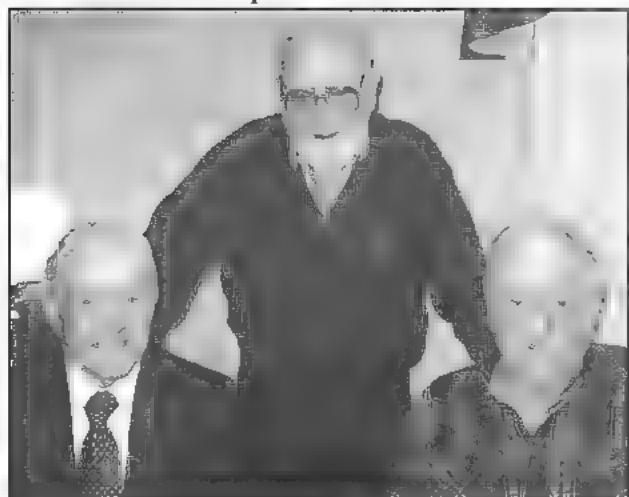


Photo: Tom Gates

Slowly She Turned . . .

by Richard Valley

Ray Cutler: You kind of like that song, don't you, Mrs. Loomis?

Rose Loomis: There isn't any other song

It isn't the most famous "turn and walk" in movie history. *Pride of place* still goes to Mae West, who followed her immortal quip "Goodness had nothing to do with it" with a "sashay" off that all but rocked the Paramount cameras recording her movie debut (in 1932's *NIGHT AFTER NIGHT*) and stole the celluloid right out from under star George Raft's nose. But Marilyn Monroe in *NIAGARA* (1953) registers well toward the top of the Walk List, and her prolonged departure in one memorable scene informs a lethal, femme fatale performance that is unlike anything else in the Monroe canon.

Marilyn's character, Rose Loomis, has just learned that her husband, George (Joseph Cotten), might have perished in an accident at the famed falls. Unbeknownst to Inspector Starkey (Denis O'Dea) and Rose's companions, Polly and Ray Cutler (Jean Peters and Casey Adams), this revelation hasn't exactly come as a shock. In fact, Rose has been plotting George's murder with her hunky lover, Patrick (Richard Allan). The Cutlers help Rose to their convertible, but, before she can climb in, she hears the prearranged signal (chimes from a nearby tower playing the song "Kiss") that George is history. Rose tells the Cutlers that she'd rather walk—then she turns and does just that, looking like anything but a woman concerned with her husband's welfare. (It's one of *NIAGARA*'s juicier twists that Rose, after learning that it's her boyfriend and not George who is literally all washed up, will meet her death in that very tower.)

NIAGARA is an entertaining film almost in spite of itself. Top-billed Monroe and Cotten are really secondary characters. Then there's the screenplay by Charles Brackett and Walter Reisch, which regularly trots out dialogue that sounds as if it were meant to be humorous. Unfortunately, it's delivered by the cast as though they hadn't been let in on the joke. Early on, George Loomis ruefully recalls the first time he saw his bosomy wife to be: "I met her in a big beer hall. She was the most popular waitress they had. I guess it was the way she put the beer on the table . . ." It's a funny line, prompting a vision of Monroe in her low-cut, trampy best, leaning over a tableful of male ogglers, but Joseph Cotten delivers it without a trace of irony. Earlier still, Rose asks a group of college-age revellers to play a recording of "Kiss," at which point George storms out of the motel room, grabs the record, and smashes it to bits. This inspires Ray Cutler to remark to Rose (again without irony). "Your husband doesn't seem to like music."

NIAGARA's film noir highlights are so justly famous—Rose's brutal murder in the tower, George being forced to spend the night with her corpse, the dark, gloomy motel room scenes contrasting with the colorful scenery just outside—that it's liable to escape a viewer's attention that what the film really has on its Technicolored mind is marriage, and that the picture it presents amidst the natural splendors of the falls is very far from a pretty one. There is the primary example of the Loomis alliance, of course, with a sluttish wife plotting mayhem and a psychopathically jealous husband who's a regular guest in the country's best mental institutions. But the couple with whom the audience is meant to identify, the clean-cut, middle-class Cutlers, have a union that, though lacking in violence, is still strikingly skewed. As played by third billed Jean Peters, Polly Cutler is a real catch—kind, considerate, possessed of a cool sense of humor and a keen intelligence. Ray Cutler, on the other hand, is an unsupportive, self-involved oaf, and he is captured perfectly by Casey Adams, particularly in what has to be one of the most obnoxious laughs ever presented on the silver screen. When one takes into consideration that *NIAGARA* was released at the dawn of the ultra-conservative fifties, watching the Cutlers is like witnessing the dark side of Ozzie and Harriet!



Richard Allan and Marilyn Monroe steam up Niagara Falls as they plot the murder of Joseph Cotten in *NIAGARA* (1953).

The Cutlers have traveled to Niagara Falls as a result of Ray's first-prize win for the most imaginative sales campaign for his employer's shredded wheat company. It's to be a long-delayed honeymoon for the young marrieds, but Ray is clearly more concerned with his career than his marriage, ignoring the romantic falls and taking buffoonish delight in his first view of the company building—"where breakfast food became a national institution."

When George Loomis is presumed dead and only Polly knows that he's still alive and crackers, Ray is annoyed and totally blind to the potential danger, dismissing the entire business as nothing more than a dream. He has other, more important things on his shredded mind: the Cutlers are being entertained by big boss Kettering and his wife (as played by Don Wilson and Lurene Tuttle, another mismatched twosome) and Ray can't afford to have an imaginative—in any sense of the word—wife. His lack of concern almost dooms Polly, who soon finds herself adrift with George in a boat heading pell mell for the thundering falls and a watery grave. (Surprisingly, Ray does little to redeem himself even by film's end, merely uttering a hopeless little "prayer" for Polly's safety while it is George who saves her life—ad-

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NATURAL WONDERS

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away attacked him, Showalter replied, "I won't be talked to this way. I'll go back to Kansas . . . or a least back to Broadway!" He stormed off the set. Hathaway followed and begged him to come back. From that point, there was no more trouble. "But then I had to have dinner with him every night," Showalter adds.

Marilyn was calmer but no less direct. Her habitual lateness had already surfaced. "She would keep us waiting for hours," said Showalter, "and Hathaway would call her 'clabberhead.'"

"What does clabberhead mean," Marilyn would ask Showalter.

"Well, Marilyn, when we make butter from milk back in Kansas, clabber is that wonderful rich stuff that's left in the churn."

Whether or not Marilyn liked Showalter's explanation, she let it be known that she would not tolerate insults: "If you are not pleased with my lateness," she told Hathaway, "take it up with Mr. Zanuck and Mr. Schenck."

She was referring to Fox Studio heads Darryl Zanuck and Joseph Schenck, who had an investment to protect since Marilyn was signed to star next in the very expensive GENTLEMAN PREFER BLONDES.

Hathaway's job was to keep Marilyn happy and get a good performance out of her. Keeping her happy was not difficult. There was a new man in Marilyn's life—baseball star Joe DiMaggio. The affair had started tentatively but built steadily to the point that Joltin' Joe visited her on location during the NIAGARA filming. "Marilyn was fond of walking around in the nude and she always left the door open," says Showalter. "The only time she locked the door was when DiMaggio came to visit."

For those who may not be familiar with the plot of NIAGARA, Monroe played the faithless, young wife of Joseph Cotten, whom she conspires to have murdered at Niagara Falls by her sexy lover, played by Richard Allan. When another couple, played by Casey Adams (Max Showalter) and Jean Peters, arrive to find the characters played by Monroe and Cotten have overstayed their cabin reservation, they are drawn into the plot. The murder goes awry, with husband killing lover and then going after Monroe. The conclusion involves Cotten and Peters in a head-on collision with the Falls.

However difficult Hathaway may have been as a director, he was a consummate craftsman. If NIAGARA had been filmed in black-and-white, and with its opening voiceover narration, its dark undertone, and its striking use of lighting throughout, it would be a fine example of film noir. But with Marilyn Monroe and Niagara Falls on view, not to have done the film in the full advantage of Technicolor would have been a travesty. The result is eye-popping. Monroe's first appearance is in bed, nude but covered with white sheets—a love goddess in the ultimate sexual environment. When she showers later in film, Monroe again insisted on playing the scene nude. "Hathaway kept telling her to stay away from the front of the shower curtain, but she didn't seem to get it," recalls Showalter. "Eventually, they used the footage but it had to be darkened considerably."

However, it is in a party scene outside the Rainbow Cabin that Marilyn Monroe burst forth in all her glory. Wearing a clinging red dress (sans underwear) and a pair of large, round, gold, fuck me earrings, she asks that her favorite record, "Kiss," be put on the phonograph. As the record plays, she turns her head until she is hit full-face with a luminous light that reveals the quintessential Marilyn radiance, beyond effervescence—an image that was ingrained on viewers for all time. Here in NIAGARA is the toss of the head that would become a trademark, and dresses that would be variously described as looking as though she had jumped into them and caught her feet



on the shoulder
straps—or were cut so low
that you could see her knees

And there is that walk, in which she turns her back to the camera and strolls away in what has been described as the longest and most famous walk in film history. Where did the walk come from? It has been said that it was the result of an ankle broken in childhood. Another source said she was double jointed. A well-known biographer claims she shortened one of her high-heel shoes to achieve the effect. Richard Allan and Max Showalter, both close friends of Betty Grable's, claim the walk was a generous gift from Betty. "She was in Betty's dressing room at Fox all the time," says Showalter. "Betty would tell her, 'Now here's the walk . . . now do it . . . but more than me!'"

The reviews for Marilyn and NIAGARA were generally quite good—with a few dissenters. *Time* magazine stated: "What lifts the film above the commonplace is Marilyn Monroe." The *Herald Tribune* said: "... she gives the kind of serpentine performance that makes the audience hate her while admiring her." The *New York Times* critic wrote: "Seen from any angle, the Falls and Miss Monroe leave little to be desired by any reasonably attentive audience." But the *New Yorker* critic wrote: "Marilyn Monroe . . . demonstrates a wide assortment of curves and a tendency to read her lines as if they were in a tongue she is not entirely familiar with."

This was a result of her work with Natasha Lytess, says Max Showalter. "When she delivered lines to me, she would not look me in the eye. 'I can't look at you and remember my lines,' she told me. I then discovered she was looking beyond me at Natasha, who was mouthing her lines for her off-camera. This is why her line readings were somewhat measured."

Showalter, Allan, Beckman, and Carey were united on the subject of Marilyn's vulnerability, warmth, and appeal. "There's been no one else like her," they echo. Whatever her gifts, the camera loved her, and she had an innate ability to play to it.

Continued on page 74

Our Man on Baker Street

by David Stuart Davies

My Interview with Basil, Part Two

The story so far Basil Rathbone is being interviewed by Edward R. Murrow for a PERSON TO PERSON television broadcast in 1957 (and not the early sixties, as I suggested in the last column). The unusual aspect of the interview was that Murrow was sitting in the studio, smoking a cigarette, while Rathbone was in his own apartment in midtown Manhattan. Now, read on.

It is quite clear that the interview was rehearsed and accurately plotted, using two cameras in the Rathbone apartment. These were the days of public faces only on television. Unlike today, our great stars never grew intimate and confessional.

Certainly, in this interview Basil Rathbone is wearing his public persona, but by the very nature of the stage-managed informality he does reveal something of his own character.

Let's eavesdrop . . .

Edward R. Murrow: Basil, I suppose you and Sherlock Holmes have an association that will just never end.

Basil Rathbone returned to the role of the World's Greatest Detective in the 1953 play SHERLOCK HOLMES, written by his wife Ouida. Included in the cast was Terence Kilburn (seated), who had played Billy the Page in the 1939 film THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES.



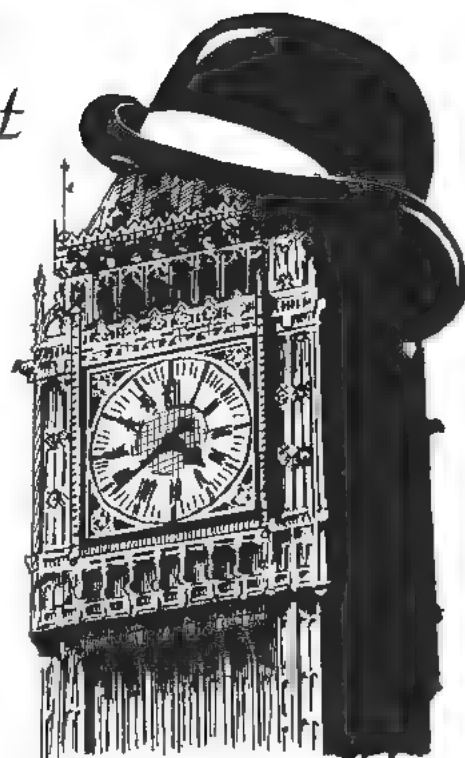
Basil Rathbone: Well, I suppose it never will, because people have been gracious enough to remember me as Sherlock Holmes pretty vividly. I am pretty grateful for it because I suppose no one fictional character could have contributed more to any one person's life than Sherlock Holmes to mine. I'm very grateful to him.

EM: Well, with all the good fortune you've had in the role, I don't understand why you have been so determined to give him up. I remember you once told me that actors are only identified with their successes.

BR: Ah, Ed, there's an "s" on that successes. I would like to be successful in more than the role of Sherlock Holmes. I think, if one is born and educated in this profession, I would like to be known as an actor and not just a one-part actor.

EM: Well, Basil, you played an awful lot of roles: Sherlock Holmes, Shakespeare, historical characters. What was the toughest one you ever played?

BR: Oh, a tree, Ed. It was to a most unappreciative audience. It was in the days of World War One. I was an intelligence officer for my battalion. I went to my CO



and said we would get a great deal of information from the enemy if we didn't fool around in the dark so much—that is, patrolling at night. I asked him if I could go out in the daylight. I think he thought I was a little crazy. His name was Colonel Munro, a wonderful guy from the Black Watch. I said we would go out camouflaged, made up as trees. You know with branches sticking out of our heads and arms and things. I took with me a fellow who is now a policeman in Detroit called Tanner—Sergeant Tanner. I met Tanner not so long ago. We used to go up into no man's land and stroll behind the German trenches. I know we haven't got all night to talk about my exploits of World War One, but I can tell you we brought back an awful lot of information, and a few prisoners, too.

It is clear watching Rathbone, that he has been primed to tell this story and that he has mixed emotions about it. On one level, he is proud of his efforts in this situation, but he is also uneasy, not wanting to appear boastful. Murrow wisely shifts gear.

EM: Basil, I know that there are other roles you enjoy more. What about the role of husband and father?

This is an obvious prompt to move on to the next segment of the interview. Like the accomplished actor he is, Basil picks it up. He stands awkwardly, ready to move into another room.

BR: I enjoy that role very much; I can't say that I have ever enjoyed any other role as much. Come and meet the family.

We move into a large sitting room to discover Basil's wife, Ouida, and his daughter, Cynthia, on a rather ornate sofa, apparently playing backgammon.



One of the most formidable criminals fought by Sherlock Holmes in the movies was that "female Moriarty," the SPIDER WOMAN (1944). Dennis Hoey was on hand as the ever-ineffectual Inspector Lestrade, the deliciously feline Gale Sondergaard was Adrea Spedding, the murderous lady in question, and the Great Detective was, of course, the great Basil Rathbone.

Basil makes a jocular but rehearsed comment about them being "at the old game of gambling." At this point, Ouida takes over. It is quite clear that she is a formidable woman, and it is with a growing awareness that, despite his height, Basil falls somewhat in her shadow.

Ouida Rathbone: Since I taught Cynthia how to play backgammon, I've never won a game. (Brief artificial laugh)

EM: Ouida, you've spent a lot of time in Hollywood. Don't you feel the urge to escape the New York winter and bask in some California sunshine?

OR: Not at all, Ed. I am a confirmed New Yorker. I love New York. I love the winters here. In California it became rather monotonous—same old climate, year in, year out. I was bored with it. One Christmas, I snowed in the house, put frost all over the windows and icicles along the eaves, and had a Christmas carol sung outside the door. The party was a great success.

Basil is somewhat left out at this point, as she rambles on about the apartment, the views over Central Park where "I can see all the seasons: winter, spring, autumn . . ." And then she runs out of seasons. In all this chatter, the word "I" is predominant rather than "we."

While she pauses for breath, Basil breaks in tentatively.

BR: You know, Ed, we love to dine here quietly with a few intimate friends. You

know, Ed, you're going to dine here with us whether you like it or not.

Murrow does not respond. Basil turns to his wife.

BR: Ouida, can I show your foyer, which you made into a dining room?

Ouida nods and Ed Murrow gets down to the nitty gritty.

EM: How many people can you fit into your dining room?

OR: Six or eight at the most. Quite a change from California.

EM: You regard that as an ideal number?

OR: I think it is, for a comfortable and friendly evening.

EM: Well, Basil, let's see the dining foyer.

We move through to a small hallway where the walls have a kind of overblown Italianate fresco. In the center, there is an ornate marble table. Basil is obviously proud of this dining area created by his wife.

BR: Incidentally, this painting on the wall was done by a little Italian friend of ours called Mr. Vella. I think it is perfectly charming. It was Ouida's design.

EM: You do like the comforts of home.

On this cue, Basil leads us into an other area, which was the original dining room, but is now an open area with a

grand piano and several antique-looking chairs.

BR: This seemed to Ouida to be a great waste of space and so she opened the sliding doors and it's become one lovely big room. And if you have a party, it's a great deal of fun and if you have a few people in for music it's a beautiful room. It has fine acoustics. The piano has been played by Arthur Rubinstein and Horowitz. Both said it was the finest Steinway they've ever played on.

While we are still sticking to a kind of script, there is a sense of eagerness to show how grand life is for the Rathbones—a life, it would seem from the telecast, controlled and shaped by Ouida. Murrow moves on to the next prompt, which deals with Rathbone's swordsmanship.

EM: Basil, I remember you wielding a sword on —oh, it must have been at least a couple of dozen pictures.

BR: Yes, I wielded a lot of swords. I have a few here. Can I get them and show them to you?

He quickly does so without waiting for a reply.

EM: Was this the real thing, Basil, or were you just play acting? Were you good with the swords?

BR: I am going to say quite frankly: yes, I am good with them. I started when I

was 18 years old and I've been working with them ever since. There's a couple here that are slightly historical just before we get down to the actual weapons. This cavalry sword was used by Colonel Rathbone in the Civil War. He fought for the South. This court sword was the sword which was used when my cousin, Sir Frank Benson, was knighted by George V. A very nice memento of a great man.

EM: 'Tis indeed. Can you still handle a foil the way you used to?

BR: I can handle a foil, but not as well as I used to.

At this point, Basil seems in his element and he demonstrates nimbly and effectively the way to use both an epee and a foil. For a moment, the fussy Ouida created decor fades away in our minds and Basil is on those castle steps again, facing the rascal from Sherwood. Parry! Thrust! Have at you! The Korn-gold score rises to a climax. The magic is still there. For a man of 65, as he was then, Basil Rathbone seems in remarkably supple shape.

The interview is drawing to a close, but there is still one more moment. Basil is commenting on the talent of the American people and pulls from a drawer a poem sent to him by a soldier who fought in the war and was badly



Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce

wounded, but survived. Sadly, we are not told which war. Basil reads the poem in his stirring, inimitable way:

I sought the quiet of a hill.
I lay full stretched and very still
Then turned and clutched the dew-moist soil
Whipped alike to my turmoil
I pressed my face upon the ground
And scratched it on a stony mound.
I cared not that I hurting, bled.

My soul was torn, my heart seemed dead
I do not know the time I prayed,
Just laid there wounded seeking peace,
Waiting for the pain to cease,
Wearily gazing at the scene
Of quiet splendour, all serene
I calmly knew what I must do:
Take leave of love, take leave of you.

It is a moving rendition. And so, as Ed Murrow tells us, it's time to leave Ouida and Basil Rathbone with their daughter, Cynthia, and return to the television studio. Strangely, we have not glimpsed a television set in this Ouida paradise—perhaps it clashed with her drapes.

Basil Rathbone emerges as a thoroughly likable fellow, eager to please, eager to justify the attention being paid to him by this television event, and eager to pay homage to his wife. Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that he leaves his Sherlock Holmes, his Guy of Gisbourne, his Wolf von Frankenstein, and all his other stirring characters behind at the studio and, on crossing the threshold of his own home, dons the mantle of the easygoing and devoted husband and father.



JEREMY BRETT!

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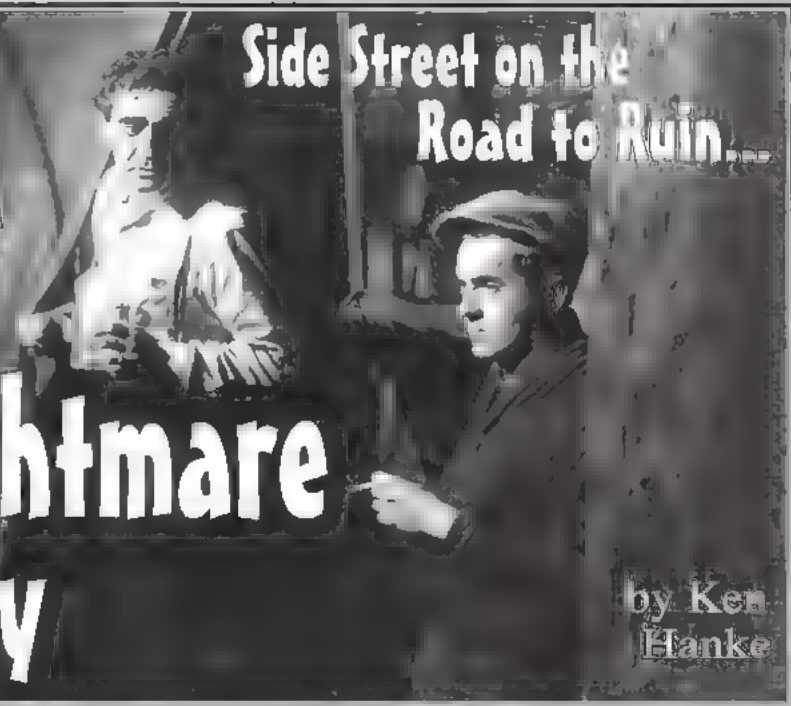
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Nightmare Alley

by Ken
Blanke

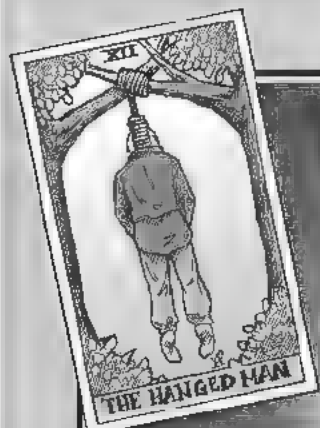
... that managed to suggest at least some of the horrible elements and deftly telescope the psychological complexities of the novel, as well as a few of the novel's most striking and memorable scenes. The novel is a masterpiece of what we might call "novelistic" writing, and it is a pity that it was made not of which they were likely to be treated as a side, while not a likable is such a thoroughgoing opportunity and moral character that little if any sympathy is in itself in the part. At bottom, what the role calls for is a charming skunk. In 1947 such a part could easily have been considered professional suicide for a popular

Zanuck was agast at the prospect. This was the last thing he had in mind for the studio's top leading man. He tried to talk Power out of it. He persuaded some of Power's friends to do the same. It was no dice. Power was adamant. He had taken a step towards attaining credibility as something more than a light leading man and occasional swash buckler here the year before with Edmund Gledhill's film of the Somerset Maugham novel *The Razor's Edge*. This Power reasoned was his chance to fully prove himself as an actor. The movie was daring, yes, but it was also a critical failure. Times were bad. He had to stick with Dick Powell and Robert Montgomery who defined their screen images by portraying a bander's Philip Marlowe in *MILDER, MY SWEET* (1945) and *LADY IN THE LAKE* (1946) respectively. They, however, had already played antiheroes. Power was lobbying to play a guide "Al" skunked without the slightest vestige of a moral center. But Lana Turner, with whom he had only a few flimsy scenes in *THE FOSTERMAN ALWAYS RINGS* (1944), was a star and, far from hurting her career, the attempt had brought her greater popularity.

The introduction of the "geek" (a debased wide-hornered creature, blacker than my ass) to the liquor and a place to sleep, is a perfect example of the director's approach. Goulding keeps Furthman's lurid war is a barker spiel about this lowest of performers intact but avoids depicting any aspect of the performance, merely allowing the Barker to toss a pair of chickens into the pit with a calous, "Okay, folks. Is feeding time," while the camera moves on dispassionately to record Stan's horrified yet fascinated reaction to the off-camera and the unhappily pained. This is both sound thematically since this is

One of the most striking—and effective—aspects of Gresham's novel is its use of the 22 cards that make up the Major Arcana in the Tarot deck (not as much a piece of common knowledge then as it is now) as the avenue for his story. Each chapter takes its fit and its cue from a card in the deck—"The Fool," "The Magician," "The High Priestess," and so on. The cards are supposed to represent 22 paths, which is entirely appropriate to the story of Stanton





Side Street on the Road to Ruin...

Nightmare Alley

by Ken Hanke

When William Lindsay Gresham's first novel *Nightmare Alley* was published in 1946 (when the writer was 37, an unusually late age for a beginning novelist), it was an immediate best-seller. The writer was not unfavorably compared to Raymond Chandler. At the time, such books were not considered works of lasting literary merit. Critically, the best that could be hoped for was grudging admiration. As Tyrone Power biographer Fred Lawrence Gules put it: "Intelligent trash," someone called it.

What mattered, of course, was not the book's actual merit, but its popularity—and its popularity assured that it would be made into a movie. Purchased by Darryl F. Zanuck for 20th Century Fox, the property was cratted into a workable screenplay by veteran screenwriter Jules Furthman and handed over to Zanuck's friend, George Jessel, to produce. Previously, Jessel had only made a couple of musicals in this capacity, so *NIGHTMARE ALLEY* was something of a departure, but Zanuck reasoned that he had the right show-business background for Gresham's dark tale of a carnival Barker who rises to fame and fortune as a bogus mentalist and a sinister spiritualist.

Acquiring a script that managed to suggest at least some of the more censorable elements and deftly telescope the psychological complexities of the novel as well as a producer who knew the milieu, was comparatively simple. Finding the right actor to play Stanton Carlisle was another matter. The role was not exactly the stuff of which matinee idols were made, nor of which they were likely to be attracted. Carlisle, while not unlikable, is such a thoroughgoing opportunist and amoral charlatan that little, if any, sympathy is inherent in the part. At bottom, what the role calls for is a charming skunk. In 1947, such a part could easily have been considered professional suicide for a popular

actor with a following expecting their hero to adhere to certain prescribed notions. It's a role for an actor more concerned with acting than with being a movie star, which is precisely what Tyrone Power—who had read the novel, turned out to be when he stepped forward and asked to play Stanton Carlisle.

"Stan Carlisle fascinated me," said Power. "He was such an unmitigated heel. I've played other disreputable fellows... but never one like Carlisle. Here was a chance to create a character different from any I had ever played before."

Zanuck was aghast at the prospect. This was the last thing he had in mind for the studio's top leading man. He tried to talk Power out of it. He persuaded some of Power's friends to do the same. It was no dice. Power was adamant. He had taken a step towards attaining credibility as something more than a light leading man and occasional swash-buckling hero the year before with Edmund Goulding's film of the Somerset Maugham novel, *The Razor's Edge*. This, Power reasoned, was his chance to fully prove himself as an actor. The move was daring, yes, but it was also a very shrewd one. Times were changing. Haven't both Dick Powell and Robert Montgomery redefined their screen images by portraying Chandler's Philip Marlowe in *MURDER, MY SWEET* (1945) and *LADY IN THE LAKE* (1946), respectively? They, however, had at least played antiheroes. Power was lobbying to play a grade "A" skunk without the slightest vestige of a moral center. But Lana Turner—with whom the bisexual Power was then involved in a romantic entanglement—had revamped herself in *THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE* the previous year, and, far from hurting her career, the attempt had brought her greater popularity.

Turner herself was pushing Power to make NIGHTMARE ALLEY. It was a time for such things. Postwar malaise was turning into postwar cynicism. The film, though not yet identified as such, was an increasingly popular subgenre. And for Power personally, the move was essential for quite another reason: though still a young man, he was possessed more of beauty than handsomeness, and not the sort of beauty that necessarily ages well. Even by the time of NIGHTMARE ALLEY, there were signs that while he would always be striking-looking, Power would not be able to coast forever on looks alone. In fact, the least satisfying thing about NIGHTMARE ALLEY is that, in the early scenes, Power looks too mature to be the callow youth he portrays, and the script's insistence on having other characters call him "kid" only worsens the situation. He seems to have instinctively known this, even if Zanuck did not.

Fortunately, Power's talent was sufficient to win the day. It was also sufficient to allow him to choose Edmund Goulding as his director. On the surface, Goulding appears almost suspect as a choice to direct the film as Power was to star in it. A sophisticate to his fingertips, Goulding (known as a "woman's director," which, of course, is Hollywoodspeak for gay) was more closely associated with such glossy entertainments as GRAND HOTEL (1932) and stylish Bette Davis weepers, including the Davis essentals DARK VICTORY (1939) and THE GREAT FLEE (1941). He seemed far more at home in the drawing rooms of the wealthy than in the sideshow of a carnival. But Power had liked and trusted the veteran director on THE RAZOR'S EDGE. Moreover, he valued Goulding's innate sense of taste and recognized that such taste was essential to keep the proceedings from descending into the merely tawdry.

From the onset of NIGHTMARE ALLEY, Power's faith in Goulding is justified. With the aid of one of the finest cinematographers of all time, Lee Garmes, Goulding establishes the fluid, almost sinuous style that marks the film from the very first images. The camera tracks in on a canvas billboard for Mademoiselle Zeena (Joan Blondell in a role she was born to play), then dissolves to Zeena herself, with the camera still tracking in on her as she eyes Stan Carlisle with undisguised sexual interest. The material may be tawdry, but Goulding presents it to us with the unabashed stylish detachment of the urbane sophisticate—his stance is that of an artist looking at the "lower depths" with a refreshing lack of judgment and cool fascination. His restraint is as remarkable as his style, and in many ways can be seen to be dictated by a decision to keep the focus on Power's character.

The introduction of the "geek" (a debased sideshow performer who eats live chickens in exchange for cheap liquor and a place to sleep) is a perfect example of the director's approach. Goulding keeps Furthman's lurid carnival barker spiel about his lowest of performers intact, but avoids depicting any aspect of the performance, merely allowing the barker to toss a pair of chickens into the pit with a callous, "Okay, folks, it's feeding time," while the camera moves on dispassionately to record Stan's horrified, yet fascinated reaction to the offscreen sounds of the unhappy poultry. This is both sound thematically, since it is to

this level that Stan will ultimately descend, and makes the film every much a showcase for Power's terrific performance without pandering to that performance. (Any actor who can register while chickens are being eaten a yard to one side of him, and a live breather performing behind him, is no need of being pandered to.) If perhaps it almost certainly is, but it's a so little wonder that Goulding would go on to record calling Power "the greatest actor of his generation." Goulding continues this approach throughout the film, even facing Power with unusually long takes in some of his more complex moments, as when he subsequently talks to Zeena about the geek and explains his attraction to the carnival. Like it or not, the crowds, the noise, the idea of keeping in on the move. Gee, those folks out there, it gives you a sort of superior feeling as if you were on the know and they were on the outside looking in.)

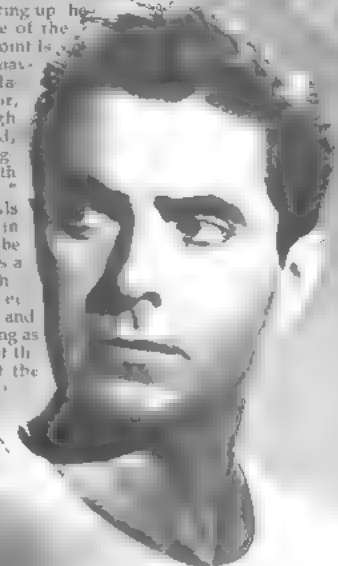
The storyline Furthman culled from the novel is fairly straightforward and less carefully layered than the source material. Gresham's novel's psychological complexity called for some fairly strong pruning in terms of length and content. Large chunks of the novel involve elaborate flashbacks to Stan's youth, his aversion to sex, and his desire to sleep with his mother—material that probably reflects Gresham's extended psychoanalytic treatment following a suicide attempt in 1939. It was good character material, but inessential to the plot. Further more, large chunks of it were impossible to even hint at in the "censorship red den" decade of 1947. What's surprising is the amount of material that did make it into the film. The extramarital affair into which Stan enters with Zeena is fairly explicit, for example, as are his obvious motives—using Zeena as a stepping stone to the big time—for the liaison, and the fact that he is troubled not at all by the fact that their affair causes her to cheat on her has-been alcoholic husband, Pete (Ian Keith, fresh from his outrageous turn as Ormond Marks in Republic's 1940 VALLEY OF THE ZOMBIES, in probably the performance of his career). Similarly, Stan's later relationship with shady psychoanalyst Dr. Lili in Ritter (Helen Walker), while inconclusive and considerably less kinky than the nearly sadomasochistic one presented in the novel, is presented without being romanticized in the bargain. Without

question, their pairing is nothing more than a combination of her sexual and psychological power over Stan and a crooked business partnership. Even toned down, it's no wonder that Zanuck was appalled by Power's choice of material. The very idea of a great screen heartthrob playing a character who uses anyone and will do anything to climb to fame and fortune as, first, a fake mind-reader, and, later, a bogus spiritualist out for the big strike was enough to make even the most cynical studio executive choke on his cigar.

One of the most striking—and effective—aspects of Gresham's novel is its use of the 22 cards that make up the Major Arcana in the Tarot deck (not as much a piece of common knowledge then as it is now) as the layout for his story. Each chapter takes its title and its cue from a card in the deck—"The Fool," "The Magician," "The High Priestess," and so on. The cards are supposed to represent 22 paths, which is entirely appropriate to the story of Stanton



function of pointing up the fatalistic nature of the story and the point is driven home by having the geek, plattered with liquor, stagger through the background, incoherently singing about "a truth to you, I'll tell." Patsy then reveals that the geek in question used to be "big time." It's a splendid approach, economical, effective, to the point, and thoroughly chilling as an indication of the inevitability of the events to come. These events are set in



in a bold leap of events that...
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Stan Carlisle has become... The Grant Stanton and seems
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ably, bringing in the characters of Imitation Katter and
Ezra Grönide (Taylor Holmes) far more quickly. In
the novel, Stan has already set himself up as a spiri-
tualist, calling himself the Reverend Carlisle, and
has successfully lured a rich woman out of her
house, where she donates to him for his "church." He
actively seeks out Dr. Ritter, who has been mentioned



The Hanged Man, combined with another reminder of the past with his master, as such, in him drives Sam to seek out Lilith in her professional capacity.



In one of his less shrewd moves, Stan takes the tabernacle, a reminder of a world of sin and sinners, for sale on the Internet. So he has to work it out. He can't get rid of the Grindle's long-departed love. First by attempting false pregnancy, then by browbeating, and finally by making her feel guilty and playing on her love for him. Stan manages to convince Molly to undertake the ghostly role. This is a situation that is considerably sump, fied and, of necessity, clichéd up from the one depicted in the book. The film never mentions that part of Grindle's obsession stems from a fact that the girl in question died as the result of a botched abortion when she was pregnant with his child. The plot created by Molly is also quite different. In the film she merely basks at the idea of even portraying the dead girl's spirit. In the novel, this isn't the problem at all. Grindle's price and the price Stan is willing to have Molly pay is considerably higher. Grindle will only be satisfied

A heel's progress. RIGHT: Carnival performers Zeena and Pete (Joan Blondell and Ian Keith) were once vaudeville headliners with a phony mind-reading act. Stan Carlisle (Tyronne Power) uses Zeena as a means to get the act's secret code. PAGE 43 LEFT: Stan flirts with Molly (Coleen Gray), much to the displeasure of strongman Bruno (Mike Mazurki). PAGE 43 RIGHT: Bruno and Zeena force Stan to marry Molly, inadvertently giving the hackster a pretty partner in his rise to the top.

Carlisle. The symbols' meanings behind the cards as dealt out by Cres can give the novel its shape and illuminate its meanings, as well as imparting a certain fatalistic sense to the events—as if Cres and Stan were reading the events of Carlisle's life from having cast his fortune with the cards.

It's a great literary device that is, of course, a total unworkable in traditional film narrative (as well as being impossible unless the filmmakers planned on following all 22 of the book's chapters). The problem, then, for director and screenwriter Furthman was to somehow convey a sense of the book's fatalism in another manner, which they shrewdly managed by making the geek and Stan's association with the creature even more pronounced than it is in the novel. The geek's presentation is absolutely altered as previously noted, in that he is never explained as he is in the book, and never seen very clearly, keeping him a figure of mystery. Moreover, the geek is brought into the film at a key point in the narrative—raining amok in a bout of delirium tremens—just prior to Stan giving a drink to Pete and listening to the washed-up fortune teller talk about the big time and how Stan will be a part of that same world. ("You're going to go places. Nothing can keep you out of the big time. You've got everything—just like I used to have.") That last ominous phrase, delivered with the knowing precision only a brilliant ham like Keith could have brought to it, serves the

function of pointing up the fatalistic nature of the story, and the point is driven home by having the geek, placated with liquor, stagger through the background, incoherently singing about "a truth to you, I'll tell." Pete then reveals that the geek in question used to be "big time." It is a splendid approach—economical, effective, to the point, and thoroughly chilling as an indication of the inevitability of the events to come. These events are set in

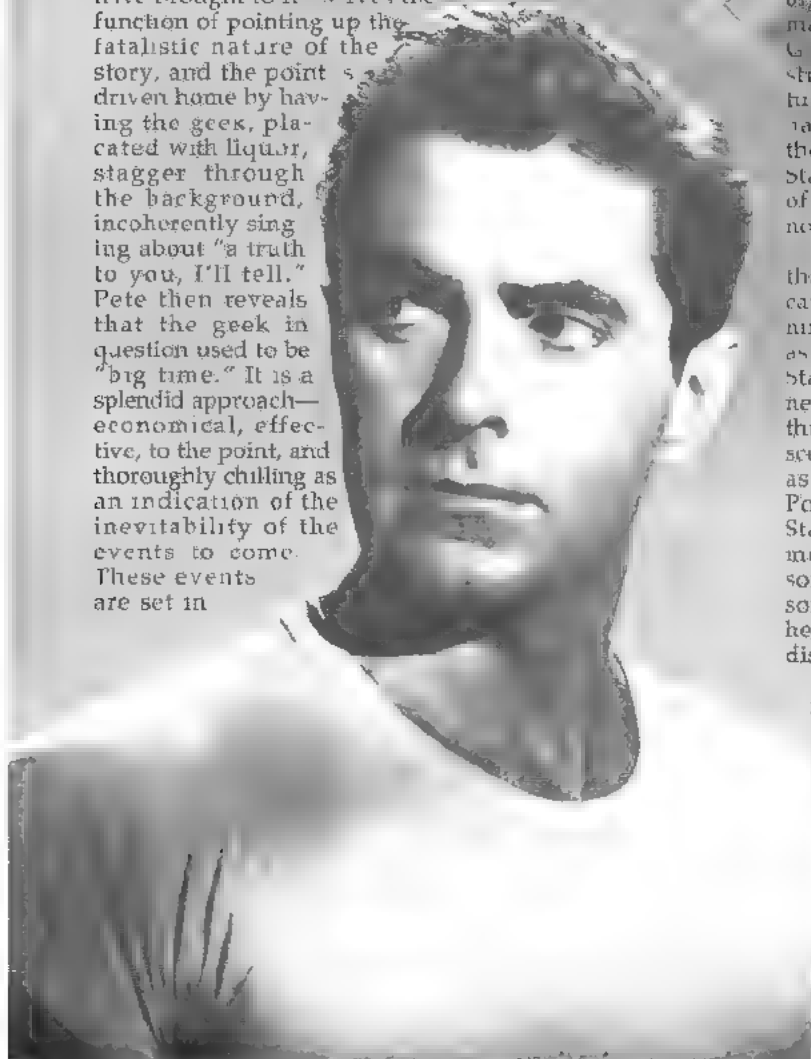


mot or when, fatefully, Stan gives Pete a bottle of wood alcohol instead of moonshine. This leads to Pete's death and Stan's first shot at the big time—as Zeena's new partner in the old mentalist act she once performed with Pete. (The book clearly implies that Stan deliberately gives Pete the wood alcohol while he is in the shop of making him an obvious killer, having whatever happens take place behind a curtain, so that Pete's death may be an accident or something more.)

Stan is now privy to the secret code that had made Zeena and Pete a hit in vaudeville before alcohol destroyed Pete's nerve and talent. In no time, he and Zeena make a success of the act and are on their way to the much vaunted big time, with Stan undermining himself by becoming romantically involved with the much younger Molly (Coleen Gray). Stan tells Molly candidly that he's merely been stringing Zeena along for the code. In a peculiar departure from the novel, Stan is here given the background of having been raised in an orphanage. Furthman thought this would generate some degree of sympathy for Stan, though, more likely, it merely removed the problems of dealing with the complex, incestuous background the novel offers.

Stan's big mistake, though, is in letting it be known that he has been dallying with Molly—something that causes Zeena and strongman Bruno (Mike Mazurki), who is himself in love with the girl, to force him to marry her just as his career with Zeena is taking hold. Opportunistically, Stan turns this misstep around and makes Molly his partner. ("Zeena and Mr. Bruno, they weren't so smart as they think.") The amazing and amazingly bold thing about this scene is that Molly is called on to accept his change of plans as a romantic event and pathetically plays it as such. Power's performance, however, leaves no doubt that, to Stan, it's strictly a great idea that will carry him just that much further up the ladder that much faster. "You're so sorry?" Molly asks him. "Baby, there's only one thing I'm sorry about—that I didn't think of this sooner!" he tells her, his eyes looking not at all at his bride but off into the distance at his impending fame.

In a bold leap of events, the pair are next seen working in a swanky nightclub. The carnival is far behind them. Stan Carlisle has become The Great Stanton and seems comfortably set in the world of the mentalist. The film telescopes the events of the novel considerably, bringing in the characters of Lilith Ritter and Ezra Grindle (Taylor Holmes) far more quickly. In the novel, Stan has already set himself up as a spiritualist, calling himself the Reverend Carlisle, and has successfully bilked a rich woman out of her house, which she donates to him for his "church." He actively seeks out Dr. Ritter, who has been mentioned





to him by one of his disciples, and it is through her that he learns of and meets Grindle (the big mark he's been after all along). The film shrewdly reshuffles the events to a more workable length by having both Ritter and Grindle present in the nightclub audience, where Ritter tries to prove Stan's fakery by asking whether or not her mother will "recover from her present illness." Sensing a trap, Stan correctly guesses that Ritter's mother has been "dead for some time."

The characterization of Lillith Ritter is intriguing in that the script goes out of its way to assure the viewer that she isn't a regular doctor (just in case anyone might become alarmed at the prospect). The film dresses her up in an impossibly butch manner, making her sexuality—or at least the role she plays in a relationship—suspect.

Impressed by Stan's savvy, Ritter at least appears to be captivated by his piercing eyes and manner, and it is this that brings him to her office. After meeting Ritter, whom he suspects is up to something shady, Stan secludes himself in her private office while she has a session with a patient, Mrs. Peabody (Julia Dean, best remembered for her role as Julia Farnham in 1944's *THE CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE*, playing the character already fleeced by Stan at this point in the novel). Discovering that Ritter makes recordings of her sessions, Stan realizes just how valuable a partnership with Ritter could be—once he sets himself up as a spiritualist rather than a mentalist. Feigning indignation over the idea, Ritter orders him out of her office.

Interestingly, in this instance, the film actually makes Stan less sympathetic than the character in the novel. There, he hits on the idea due to the well-meaning advice of an old man at a private party, and decides to follow through on it because of a snobbish note handed him by the hostess telling him not to mingle with the guests. In the film, Stan is motivated solely by greed and his desire for power.

Before he can cash in, though, he and Molly are visited by Zeena and Bruno. In a sequence not found in the novel—but one which again brings the fatalistic nature of the story back into focus—Zeena reads the Tarot and warns Stan against making the career move he's considering. She turns over the card that indicates how it will turn out: the Hanged Man, who, according to the Tarot, represents the Magician drowned in waters for which he is himself responsible. "Wasn't that Pete's card?" asks Stan, suddenly afraid. "Sure. Now it's yours," smiles Zeena. Then, just as it did prior to Pete's death, the Hanged Man card is later found on the floor. (In a boldly stylistic move, Goulding blends the faint sound of the geek's screams with the continuous music on the soundtrack.)

The Hanged Man, combined with another reminder of Pete's death when his masseur uses alcohol on him, drives Stan to seek out Lillith in her professional capacity.

She offers him a degree of absolution by telling him that he naturally suffers from guilt since he profited by Pete's death. She also counsels him that he showed good sense in not telling this story to anyone else, since he "might have had a hard time trying to explain that story to the police." Now that she has something on Stan, Lillith begins to let down her guard about her own motives, hinting that the two of them have a not dissimilar idea about their joint involvement in the "spook racket."

Stan's chance to make the crossover into spiritualism occurs when Mrs. Peabody is in the nightclub audience. Using the information he's already learned from her recorded session with Lillith, he convinces Mrs. Peabody of his contact with her departed daughter Caroline. For dramatic effect, Stan passes out on the nightclub floor, thereby ensuring that his sudden realization of his spiritual powers receives the maximum publicity.

In another clever and workable departure from the novel Stan connects with Ezra Grindle not because Grindle is interested in Stan's "powers" himself, but because he wants to unmask him and disabuse Mrs. Peabody of the notion of those psychic abilities. At this point, the script indulges in a major economically-based (at best, *NIGHTMARE ALLEY* was a medium budget film) compression of events, reducing a complex stretch of the novel to something Stan tells Lillith after the fact—how he convinced Grindle, with the aid of the information he got from her, of the legitimate nature of his spiritual gifts. Grindle coughs up enough for Stan to start building his dream spiritualist "tabernacle," and is willing to buy him a radio station in the bargain. There's only one catch. Grindle wants to actually see the spirit of a woman who's been dead some 35 years and with whom he is still in love. ("I think somebody must have sold his mother a wooden nutmeg," complains Stan concerning the magnitude of the order.)

In one of his less shrewd moves, Stan turns the cash tabernacle donation of \$150,000 over to Lillith for safe keeping, then sets out to work the illusion of producing Grindle's long departed love. First by attempting false piety, then by browbeating, and finally by making her feel guilty and playing on her love for him, Stan manages to convince Molly to undertake the ghostly role. This is a situation that is considerably simplified and, of necessity, cleaned up from the one depicted in the book. The film never mentions that part of Grindle's obsession stems from the fact that the girl in question died as the result of a botched abortion when she was pregnant with his child. The part played by Molly is also quite different. In the film, she merely balks at the idea of even portraying the dead girl's spirit. In the novel, this isn't the problem at all—Grindle's price and the price Stan is willing to have Molly pay is considerably higher. Grindle will only be satisfied if



LEFT: A nightclub performance brings Stan and Molly (Tyrone Power and Coleen Gray) into contact with a party including Mrs. Peabody (Julia Dean), Ezra Grindle (Taylor Holmes), and scheming psychiatrist Lillith Ritter (Helen Walker). RIGHT: A phony faint convinces Mrs. Peabody that Stan has the right spiritual stuff.



he can actually make love to the spirit of his long-snuffed old flame!

The film obviously isn't able to take things to quite this extreme, but in its place, it does offer a powerful and surprising scene between Stan and Molly. For most of the film, Molly is little more than a long suffering, supposedly romantic wife. Here, thanks to good dialogue from Furthman, and the skilled playing of Coleen Gray, who manages to hold her own with Power's ultra-slick performer, Molly becomes something else again. In previous films—not even such quasi-religious pictures as 1941's *GOD KNOWS MY WAY*—talk seriously or openly about God, but in *NIGHTMARE ALLEY* Molly frets over the possibility of Stan, guilty of false piety, being struck down by an outraged Jehovah. Stan is genuinely shocked. He tells Molly how he has, for all his perfidious trickery, oh so carefully kept the name of God out of everything he's done—and that he has done so deliberately, so as not to break the Third Commandment by taking the Lord's name in vain. What is disconcerting about the scene isn't the talk of God per se (though it's certainly one of the few adult discussions on the topic in a film of its period), but the fact that Stan, an obvious believer, thinks himself so very shrewd that he has kept himself in the clear by virtue of what amounts to a loophole—adhering to the letter of the commandment in question, he believes he has not broken it, despite the fact that but for the word "God," he has broken it in almost ev-

ery conceivable way. What in the novel is a moral and ethical dilemma, becomes more of a spiritual one in the film.

The dramatic highlight is reached when Stan stages his ectoplasmic experience in Grindle's private garden. The old man is so moved and so contrite over seeing the supposed spectre that he breaks down, pleading with the ghost to ask God to forgive him. This is more than Molly can bear and she tearfully slips out of character, revealing the trickery and dashing forever Stan's hopes of making the really big strike as a spiritualist—or possibly as anything, since he has an altercation with Grindle that leaves the millionaires unconscious.

Leaving Molly with a promise of meeting her later at a train station, Stan heads straight to Lillith, telling her the story. She coolly assesses the situation, gives him the envelope of money, promises to deal with Grindle—and sends him on his way—whereupon he quickly discovers that the 150 thousand-dollar bills have mysteriously become 150 one-dollar bills. Enraged, Stan heads straight back to Lillith. "You're good. You're awfully good—just about the best I ever saw," he tells her in a line reminiscent of Bogart flattering his nemesis in *THE MALTESE FAULCON* (1941).

In fact, Lillith Ritter is even better than Stan imagines. When she threatens him, he warns her that she's in this with him. "Please, Mr. Carlisle, try to understand that

Continued on Page 50

The two women in Stan Carlisle's life are his faithful, loving wife Molly and his treacherous business partner, Dr. Lillith Ritter. Molly stands by her man, but Lillith tries to con the con man—and gets away with it.



To fright fans, Coleen Gray is best known as **THE LEECH WOMAN**, the title character of a 1960 chiller from Universal. For those who love musical comedy, she's remembered as Bing Crosby's costar in **RIDING HIGH** (1950). If it's sci-fi, then **PHANTOM PLANET** (1961) comes to mind, and for Westerns you can't do better than **RED RIVER** (1948).

If *film noir* is your dark cup of crime, however, **NIGHTMARE ALLEY** (1947) is right down your ... alley. It was one of the most adult and challenging movies to emerge from Hollywood in the forties, and Coleen

Gray was its leading lady. As Molly, the carnival girl tied by love to an unscrupulous huckster, she conveyed sweetness and naivete and vulnerability, the sort that went hand-in-hand with tragedy.

Sweet she was, but needless to say, there were many sides to this "fine, generally underrated actress." (Pauline Kael's words, not ours.) If she never made it to the front ranks of stars, it certainly wasn't due to a lack of talent. For her *Scarlet Street* interview, Coleen Gray proved to be as charming a woman as one might hope to meet. ...



Riding High on Nightmare Alley

Coleen Gray

interviewed by Michael Brunas



LEFT: It may look like sweet, demure Coleen Gray has Tyrone Power by the . . . that is, has the advantage of Tyrone Power in this scene from *NIGHTMARE ALLEY* (1947), but it's really Power (as Stan Carlisle) who's got the upper hand. **RIGHT:** Coleen had to go to Darryl F. Zanuck himself to get permission to star opposite John Wayne in *RED RIVER* (1948). **NEXT PAGE:** Frank Capra remade his own 1934 film *BROADWAY BILL* as *RIDING HIGH* (1950) with Coleen and Bing Crosby.

Scarlet Street: How did you get started in show business?

Coleen Gray: Are you really ready for the long story? (Laughs) I came out to California during World War II. I had a social conscience and I found myself wanting to save the world. I got a job at the YWCA in typing! It was pretty boring. I wasn't the secretarial type whatsoever. I had a Bachelor of Arts degree summa cum laude from Hamline University, with majors in music and literature, but I had no skills. Well, I wasn't saving the world, but I was dying from ennui. I looked through the newspaper want ads and saw that a little theater group was casting *LETTERS TO LUCERNE*. I had appeared in that play in college. So off I went in the rain and knocked on this door and out comes Carl Heins Roth, creator of the Carl Heins Roth Players. He had been an associate of Max Reinhardt in Vienna. I auditioned and he gave me the lead.

SS: Nice start!

CG: But it was one of those little theaters where you paid tuition. In this case, it was \$20 a month and I was getting \$60 a month. Nevertheless, I managed to do three plays with them. In the third play, *BRIEF MUSIC*, I was seen by a talent agent, Jack Pomeroy. He signed to represent me and started taking me around to the studios. Meanwhile, I had signed up to go to Yosemite as a waitress, because I love nature and the outdoors. I had worked for two summers in Glacier Park in Montana when I was going to college. Well, one day my agent took me to 20th Century Fox studios. I was sitting on a bench out in the hall, waiting because my agent had disappeared. A man walked by and said, "Are you waiting to see me?" I said, "I don't know, who are you?" It was Jim Ryan, who was second-in-command in the talent department. (Laughs) So, we talked and he was very nice. He said, "Wait here and I'll be back." So, I waited in his office. Pretty soon he came back and said, "Follow

me." I thought, "What's going on here?" He took me across the hall to the office of Rufus LeMaire, who was the head of casting at Fox. In this large room were my agent and several other people, and behind the desk at the end of the room was this man who had the face of a bulldog! He pounded the desk and said, "Well, you said you could act, so let's see you act!" Quick as a fox, I remembered two contrasting scenes from *BRIEF MUSIC*. One was happy and joyful; the other was dramatic and grief stricken. I shed the appropriate tears at the proper time. Mr. LeMaire started pounding on the desk again and said yelling at Ivan Kahn, the head of the talent department. "Why haven't you brought her in?" And Ivan said, "Oh, I was going to!" So he quickly manufactured a note from his office, claiming he was going to bring me in—but that wasn't true!

SS: He just wanted to cover himself.

CG: The upshot was that the studio signed me to a contract, the exclusive rights to a screen test. This was July 14, 1944—Bastille Day. I contacted Yosemite and said, "I cannot be your waitress this summer!" Then I sat home waiting for this screen test—and it didn't happen until October!

SS: What did you do in the meantime?

CG: I got a job as a clerk in Thrifty Drug Store for 25 cents an hour. I also got a job at the Farmer's Market, working in a little shop. So, I was eking out an existence waiting for this screen test. There was no money. They signed you to a contract, but they didn't pay you. Finally the day arrived and I was tested. It was one of those glorious days when you feel as if you had swallowed an electric light bulb and it's glowing inside. So they were impressed. I did a scene adapted from *GREEN GROW THE LILACS*, which became *OKLAHOMA!* Rod Amateau, a screenwriter at Fox, wrote the scene. He later became my first husband and the father of my first child.

SS: Didn't he do a lot of TV in the fifties?

CG: Oh, yes! *DOBBIE GILLIS* and things like that. Anyway, they put me under contract. I thought, "Well, now I can get some money"—but they put me on lay-off! They'd sign you for 26 weeks out of 52 and the rest of the time they wouldn't pay you. I didn't know that! I had to borrow money just to keep living!

SS: Was the studio responsible for changing your name?

CG: Well, when they signed me they said Doris Bernice Jensen would have to go! I went down the list of names and thought Coleen had a lovely sound to it, but because I'm Danish and not Irish I took one "l" out, so I am the only one "l" Coleen in captivity! (Laughs) I needed a short name so it could fit on a marquee, so I picked the name Gray. It's been a good name for me.

SS: How did you land the role in *RED RIVER* for Howard Hawks?

CG: My agent said that Howard Hawks was casting for *RED RIVER*. He liked to pick unknowns whom he could mold like Lauren Bacall. I went over to see Mr. Hawks, who was very nice and said, "If you can lower your voice an octave by Monday, we'll test you." He suggested I go out someplace and scream until my voice was broken. He liked these low, sexy voices. Well, I did the best I could and made my test with John Wayne. Hawks, who had tested around 300 girls in town, chose me. Then came the thunder and lightning, because my agent hadn't checked with Fox for permission. They called me in to Ben Lyon's office. Rufus LeMaire was no longer there, and Lyon said, "How dare you do this without asking our permission." My agent was not allowed on the lot and they did not give me permission to do the picture. Well, there was only one thing to do . . . go to the top.

SS: Darryl F. Zanuck, of course.

CG: I had heard these terrible stories about Mr. Zanuck, the Womanizer, and how he chased girls around his desk and so forth. He chased Judy Holliday

"I loved every bit of LEECH WOMAN! One of my favorite scenes is where I pick up Arthur Batanides. He wants to rob me, and I want his pineal gland! I just think that's a gem!"

around a desk trying to cop a feel, so she took out a falsie and said, "Here, try this." (Laughs) There was one saving grace: we were both from Nebraska, so I got an appointment with him. I said, "I'm so glad to see you, Mr. Zanuck. You're from Wahoo and I'm from Staplehurst"—and he didn't chase me at all! I explained the situation. Here was a good part in a Hawks movie and Fox wasn't using me, anyway. Zanuck said, "If Howard will call and talk to me personally, we'll see what we can do." They played polo and croquet together and were good friends. So Howard Hawks called and I got the part—but believe me, Ben Lyon disliked me from then on because I went over his head.

SS: Before you made *RED RIVER*, you appeared in one of the most famous film no. 1s *KISS OF DEATH*.

CG: Early in 1947, my husband Rod Amateau and I went out of town to Lucerne Valley for the weekend. When we got back on Sunday night, all hell had broken loose! We didn't tell anybody we would be going and Henry Hathaway had asked to see me for a part in *KISS OF DEATH*. The studio called and couldn't reach us; they called Rod's parents, who didn't know where we were. Finally, they sent the police

out after us and they couldn't find us! When I got back on Monday morning, I was called on the carpet by Ben Lyon, who said, "What do you mean going out of town without permission? Betty Grable doesn't even go to the bathroom without getting permission! You just lost the chance of a lifetime! Hathaway wanted you for *KISS OF DEATH*, but he's gone back to New York. You're in trouble!" Well, Henry Hathaway came back to town and I got to see him. I went to wardrobe and got dressed up as sort of a waif. I didn't have to read for the part, because he had seen some tests of me for *NIGHTMARE ALLEY*.

SS: Wasn't *NIGHTMARE ALLEY* filmed later, though?

CG: Yes. I read the book *Nightmare Alley* and I knew that I was destined to play Molly. I went to Darryl Zanuck and told him that I was going to play Molly. He said, "If we get a big name for this geek we might be able to float an unknown for Molly. But if we get just a medium-sized name for the geek, then we have to go for a big-name Molly." That made sense; I could understand that I was allowed to test with people who were up for Tyrone Power's part. Mark Stevens tested. It was some of that test footage from *NIGHTMARE ALLEY* that

Henry Hathaway saw when he wanted me for *KISS OF DEATH*.

SS: In other words you got the part in *KISS OF DEATH* because of a movie you hadn't even made yet.

CG: Yes! While I was shooting *KISS OF DEATH* on location in New York, Fox wanted to renew my contract on the old terms. The contract said that, at six month intervals, I'd get a raise. Instead they said, "You can have *NIGHTMARE ALLEY* if you stay on for the same money. Otherwise, you can't have it." Well, I cried. It just wasn't fair. I said, "If that's the way you're going to be, I'll just have to give up *NIGHTMARE ALLEY*." And my agent was sweating. He wasn't doing any good; they're so scared, those people. I stood firm and they gave me the raise and *NIGHTMARE ALLEY*.

SS: Henry Hathaway had the reputation of being really rough on actors. Did he give you any trouble?

CG: On one scene he got really angry and I started to cry and had to leave the set. My eyelashes floated down the river with my tears. He came upstairs and said, "Don't cry, honey, it's all right. You really are good and I didn't mean to hurt your feelings." He was an absolute lamb, a real teddy bear ever after.

SS: You played opposite Victor Mature not only in *KISS OF DEATH*, but in a 1948 Western, *FURY AT FURNACE CREEK*. He was known as a beefcake star. Did you find him to be a credible leading man?





LEFT: June and Paul Talbot (Coleen Gray and Phillip Terry) safari through Africa in search of a youth restorer. They find it, but it costs Paul his life and **(RIGHT)** transforms June into **THE LEECH WOMAN** (1960).

CG: Oh, yes! *KISS OF DEATH* was his best picture. He was magnificent in it.
SS: How did George Jessel, of all people, come to produce *NIGHTMARE ALLEY*?

CG: Perhaps because he was a vaudevilian. He produced a few musicals at Fox, but I honestly don't know how he got so lucky as to get the script. Maybe nobody else wanted it, because it was ahead of its time. I'm glad Edmund Goulding was the director. They chose Tyrone Power as the male lead and, when Zanuck saw the footage from *KISS OF DEATH*, he decided I could play Molly. The picture stuck pretty close to the book. William Lindsay Gresham was the author. He and Horace McCoy, who wrote *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, were similar writers who had this kind of tawdry realism. It was Ty's favorite part and he felt he did his best acting.

SS: Did you enjoy working with Power?

CG: He was a lovely man. A gentleman. Of course, I'd had a crush on him when I was 14 years old. I thought he was the most gorgeous person ever to grace the earth, so to have the opportunity to work with him and be kissed by him—you could imagine! This starstruck teenager had not matured, but it worked fine for the character. He had an aura when he came on the soundstage; it was as if he walked on air. I had a strong impression that his feet never touched the ground! Especially when he played the mentalist dressed in his tuxedo—he had that posture, that grandeur. He had that quality in real life. He had been married to Annabella, but he was going with Lana Turner and they were such a gorgeous couple. When we were doing the ending, we were on the back lot at night and she'd visit him. They would sit in director's chairs. I'd go to my trailer and look through Venetian blinds. My eyes were glued to the two of them, because they were such glamorous people. Even in his makeup as the geek, he had this charisma. I thought to be as beautiful as she and as sophisticated and to be his sweetheart—could anything be more wonderful? I was married, but we all have our fantasies!

SS: Your costars in *NIGHTMARE ALLEY* were Joan Blondell and Helen Walker.

CG: And Ian Keith was so fabulous as Blondell's husband.

SS: It could have been just a stock part, but he gave it depth.

CG: It was incredible. He was a Shakespearean actor who did a wonderful job.

SS: Would it be fair to say that *NIGHTMARE ALLEY* is your favorite film?

CG: Oh, yes! *NIGHTMARE ALLEY* and *RIDING HIGH*.

SS: Wasn't *NIGHTMARE ALLEY* a flop at the time?

CG: Yes, but when it was revived 10 or 15 years later, it had a much better reception. Goulding was a fine director.

SS: How did you prepare to play Molly?

CG: I was going to a coach, George Sadanoff, because that was the thing to do if you got a good part, you sought out a coach to help you study and prepare, because you don't get much help. If you don't know something about what you're doing before you get there, it's too bad, baby! Ty was studying with Elsa Schreiber, who was Sadanoff's wife, so when we got together, our scenes worked very well. There's one scene in particular, when Ty gets me to agree to do an impersonation of the dead girl in the garden. I say, "You can't do that! You're going against God!" At that point, my character is so torn and wondering what to do. Well, I really get into character and, if anything, overact at the drop of a hat. Directors would say, "Coleen, on a scale of one-to-ten, will you please take it down to three!" (Laughs) We were doing this scene and Goulding called "Cut!" He took me aside and said, "When you get to that part, I want you to think of nothing but cabbages." So I looked at him and said, "Sure. All right." We went back, did the scene, and I repeated my same thought processes—my confusion and my conscience—and he said, "Cut!" He took me aside and said, "I told you to think of cabbages!" I said, "Yes, sir!" To hell with him, you know? We did this about three times and he finally said, "We'll stay here all day until you think of cab-

bages!" I said, "All right" and then, under my breath, "You so and so!" So we did it again. And I thought, "All right! Cabbages!" And he said, "Print!"

SS: Your acting was too big for the scene?

CG: Absolutely. And when you see it on the screen, it's perfect. It was just the silent moment before the cut. In other words, "Cabbages" allowed the audience to have more participation. I was no judge of myself at that point. Thank goodness when you have a director who knows what to do and will tone you down when you're overdoing it. I wish I'd had somebody like that more often.

SS: *RIDING HIGH* is a rather underrated Frank Capra picture.

CG: I've been in a lot of underrated pictures. *RIDING HIGH* was charming and Capra was my idol. I just loved him. There was one scene where a chicken catches fire. Capra said, "Okay, Coleen, mean it." And I did. I cried with this damned chicken on fire.

SS: That's a chicken that you were cooking, presumably?

CG: Oh, yes! (Laughs) The chicken was in the oven and when Bing Crosby put the fire out, I really started to cry. And Bing looked at me and said, "You look worse than the chicken!" They printed it and I was glad because I really felt that. When we ran that scene in the rushes the next day, everybody laughed! My heart was breaking, but the effect was comedic. I was totally sincere. I didn't know the scene was supposed to be funny. I hadn't a clue!

SS: How did you get along with Crosby? He had a bit of a frosty reputation.

CG: He was aloof, but we got along just fine. He was on the set one day reading a book by T. S. Eliot called *Notes Toward a Definition of Culture*! I remember when we shot the "Sunshine Cake" number, which was a rumba kind of thing. Well, I'm not a dancer and Charlie O'Curran had to teach this routine to me. I had a terrible time with it. He said, "You keep your shoulders down, your elbows out, your fanny in, your knees loose..." I couldn't get all these things at one time and he said, "Come on, learn this damn

thing. You're making more money than I am, so learn it!" He was really wretched to me. When the day came to film it, I was half weeping with anxiety. I held my head up, because when you do that the tears run down inside your nose but they don't come down your cheek. Did you know that?

SS: Actually, no.

CG: (Laughs) Now, you do! Anyway, Crosby could see that I was upset. I said, "I'm trying, but I need a rehearsal!" And he went over to Capra and said, "Frank, I don't feel comfortable with this. Let's rehearse it so he came to my rescue. I just loved him for that."

SS: The number comes off very well.

CG: It was precious. That "Sunshine" scene can stand on its own. It's a little gem. Clarence Muse played the rhythm in that, but he just didn't have any sense of rhythm. He was a wonderful singer, but he couldn't keep a beat. So they had Terry Potkin, a professional musician, doing it with his hands blackened! By the way, Bing Crosby couldn't read music, he learned things by ear. I was the only one who could read music in that doggone thing!

SS: You made an extremely interesting film noir called *SLEEPING CITY*, which was shot in New York City in 1950. You played a sweet little nurse who turns out to be a criminal.

CG: I loved that, because for once I got away from those goody two-shoes roles and played a villainess. I really welcomed the opportunity. That was directed by little Georgie Sherman. I always loved shooting in New York. I once did something for TV, an Ellery Queen movie.

SS: DON'T LOOK BEHIND YOU?

CG: Yes. That was very good. I had a strange part in that, too. Every once in a while, something good would come along.

SS: And you played the villain again. In 1951, you appeared in a Universal International Western called *APACHE DRUMS*, which was produced by the legendary Val Lewton.

CG: I loved him! Another genius. He was a poet, a man of great, exquisite taste. We used to have conversations on many subjects. He was brilliant.

SS: He died a broken man.

CG: Yes, I went to his funeral. It's sad. There were a lot of wonderful, artistic people in Hollywood who never saw the light of day as far as true acclaim and recognition.

SS: How were you cast in *THE KILLING*?

CG: I guess Stanley Kubrick wanted that same quality as in *KISS OF DEATH*. I was happy to work with Kubrick, although it was a small part. But as the English say, "There are no small parts, only small actors."

SS: Kubrick became a top director.

CG: I went to see a picture of his called *KILLER'S KISS*, which he and his wife made in New York on a shoestring budget. I thought it was just brilliant. You could tell that this man was a genius.

SS: One always thinks of Kubrick as being very intense and humorless.

CG: Well, he was a very low key type—he dressed poorly, he wore clodhopper shoes, and he didn't say much. He didn't direct much. I actually remember more about his wife, who was the artistic director. There was a scene in the beginning when Sterling Hayden comes out of prison. I was buttoning my blouse, obviously we had been to bed. We were in this little room and the window shade was kind of cockeyed. The set dresser came and straightened it the way it should look, but as soon as he had gone, Kubrick's wife came in and made it cockeyed again. (Laughs) Nothing was said! Then the set dresser would come and straighten it out, and she would come back and unstraighten it! She finally won out!

SS: Did you ever see Kubrick again after the movie wrapped?

CG: No. I saw 2001. *A SPACE ODYSSEY*. I thought that was kind of strange. Frankly, I thought *THE KILLING* was far more interesting and more gripping. It



Coleen Gray appeared opposite John Beal in *THE VAMPIRE* (1957), one of the best low-budget fright flicks of the decade.

was Marie Winsor's starring moment... she should have had top billing, not me, for heaven's sake. She was so good!

SS: Did Kubrick have complete artistic control of *THE KILLING*?

CG: Yes, it was a Kubrick-Harris picture. James Harris was a pleasant, kind of mousy person, very quiet. Kubrick was just an odd individual. Looked strange. A little like Garrison Keillor, but short. That kind of odd-looking face. But he got everything he wanted and was very efficient. He had a great cast of characters: Elisha Cook, Timothy Carey. I've been very fortunate. *NIGHTMARE ALLEY*, *RIDING HIGH*, and *THE KILLING* all had an intense congregation of stellar character actors, which made for tremendous pictures.

SS: *THE KILLING* was obviously inspired by *THE ASPHALT JUNGLE*.

CG: United Artists, who released it, didn't know what they had. It wasn't properly exploited, unfortunately. The ending was like *LE MILLION*, the French picture by René Clair.

SS: That's where the suitcase full of money falls from the baggage truck and all the loot blows away.

CG: And that zombie look on Sterling Hayden's face! When I saw him, I thought, Edmund Goulding must have been telling him, "Think cabbages!"

SS: In 1957, you made a very effective B horror movie called *THE VAMPIRE*, which was actually shot under the title *MARK OF THE VAMPIRE*. It's got something of a cult reputation, now.

CG: That was shot in 10 days, but at the Roach studios. I think we all suffered with this picture, being a B picture. But you wouldn't believe the fan mail that I get, from respectable people, and sometimes I get photographs of John Beal and myself, with John as the vampire about to bite my throat! John was a lovely man, very intelligent, charming, and modest.

SS: You appeared in quite a few television shows including *PERRY MASON*.

CG: Raymond Burr was so remote. He would not engage in conversation, but I'd hear about the jokes he played on Barbara Hale. She once said she loved the color green. One day she went into her dressing room and everything was painted green! Even the toilet was filled with solid green Jello with a rose floating on it! (Laughs) Raymond Burr had a tremendous sense of humor. I made a movie with him called *PJ*—a good movie, by the way. We had to dance and I was amazed how light he was on his feet. A really good dancer for all of that weight.

SS: One of horror fandom's favorite Coleen Gray performances is in a 1960 movie called *THE LEECH WOMAN*.

CG: Oh, I loved every bit of *LEECH WOMAN*! It's a camp horror picture, but I remembered what Frank Capra said: "Mean it!" And I meant every thing in that picture. That was one where I went kind of overboard. The one in which I went really overboard was *COPPER SKY*.

SS: That was actually a 1957 Western remake of *THE AFRICAN QUEEN*.

CG: You can view that and laugh at the whole doggone picture, which was exactly what happened. I enjoyed making it so much and everyone on the set had applauded one particular scene. I thought I was a great actress and they said, "You're going to get an Academy Award for this, Coleen." I saw it at a theater in Westwood, which was packed with college kids. They laughed from beginning to end. I just crawled out of there with a scarf around my head. I was so mortified! (Laughs)

SS: You were covered in globs of makeup in *THE LEECH WOMAN*.



LEFT: When Lillith Ritter (Helen Walker) lets her hair down, watch out! Stan Carlisle (Tyrone Power) is the con man outconned in the classic **NIGHTMARE ALLEY**. **RIGHT:** Stan's descent is marked by his alcoholism, a sinister signpost pointing to his sorry future as a carnival geek.

NIGHTMARE ALLEY

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these delusions in regard to me are a part of your mental condition," she informs him. "When I first examined you, you were being tortured by guilt reactions connected with the death of that drunken mentalist during your carnival days." Stan, realizing that the rags about to be pulled from under his feet, lamely argues the point, saying that Pete's death was an accident. "I'm a psychologist, not a judge," Lillith replies. "What I want to explain is that all these things you think you have done lately, or that you think have been done to you are merely the fantasy guilt of your past life projected on the present. Do I make myself clear? You must regard it all as a nightmare." Then she settles in on the kill. "The police records show that a carnival performer by the name of Peter Kumbien actually died of wood alcohol poisoning in Burleigh, Texas. Self-administered. You told me you gave him that bottle of wood alcohol yourself, but I suppose that was just another one of your homicidal hallucinations, wasn't it? Or was the homicide a reality, too?"

If this isn't enough, Lillith then reveals that she has Stan's whole story on record and offers to let him hear a playback of it "any time you like." Stan makes a last desperate bid that he can prove she was in the Grindle deal with him, which she smoothly brushes off as "transference." "Really, Mr. Carlisle, I hate to say this to you, but you simply must have hospital care. We can't have you wandering about getting into trouble, can we? The sound of an approaching police siren rises in the background and Stan accuses Lillith of having sent for the police. Only she claims she doesn't hear any siren. Stan, already in an excitable state, starts to crack. "Let me get you a sedative," Lillith offers smoothly. "Then I'll drive you down to St. Joseph's hospital. It's not very far from here. They'll take good care of you and you can have a nice, long rest. Please, Mr. Carlisle, put yourself in my hands; you can trust me absolutely." Panic stricken—and rightly so—over that prospect, Stan runs away.

The final encounter between Stan and Lillith Ritter is one of the most intriguing in the film on several levels and is actually more complex than the one presented in the book, due to the way it is handled. The first (and most telling) tonal/probable aspect lies in the fact that this one sequence presents Ritter in a far more feminine manner than she has been shown elsewhere in the film. For once, her hair is down, she is less severely made up, and there is no trace of manliness about her. Her manner becomes more feminine, almost flirtatious, as the scene progresses—most especially when she moves in on Stan to let him know that

she investigated his story and has the goods on him. It is at her most feminine that Lillith Ritter is also at her most vicious and coldly dangerous. The suit-wearing professional was far less terrifying than this, which may be the most unsettling image in all *noir*! Also interesting is the fact that this sequence nearly parallels Molly's big scene with Stan, allowing Lillith (in a beautiful performance from Helen Walker) to similarly reveal that she knows more about Stan than Stan perhaps knows himself. Of course, Lillith is considerably shrewder than Molly. Stan is at the mercy of a hustler far cleverer than himself, proving that there's no easier mark than a con man himself. Finally, the film can do something that the novel can't accomplish in such an implicit manner—by ending the scene where it does, with Stan making a dash for it, we never know whether or not the approaching sirens are real or a figment of Stan's imagination. Either interpretation is possible and both may well be valid, since in a very real sense Stan has created his own demons. (To put it in terms of the Tarot, here the magician begins drowning in the flood of his own creation as prophesied by the Hanged Man card.)

In one of the few instances in which the film softens Stan's character, he packs Molly off on the train back to the carnival, rather than drag her down into what he now realizes is his inevitable descent. Stan's fall from greatness is less detailed in the film than in the novel, limited to a couple of effectively sketched scenes. The first is a creepy scene in a seamy hotel, where he succumbs to the temptation to take to drink in an effort to forget his plight. As the bottle reaches his lips, the camera pulls back and once again the geek is heard screaming dimly on the soundtrack. From this, the film jumps straight to a variation on Gressham's chapter, "The Hermit," the image in the Tarot of a sole traveler with a lantern held in front of him—a seeker with the answer perpetually before him, always just out of his reach. The film, though, departs slightly from the novel by stressing the fact that Stan has now become Pete—he gives the same spiel that Pete gave him just before the episode with the wood alcohol. The only difference is that Stan's audience is a gang of hoodos, who drain his bottle for him.

Stan quickly reaches bottom, resuscitating as a pathetic drunk looking for work at a carnival. "Sorry, buddy, I'm all filled up," the carnival owner (Roy Roberts) tells him, adding, "Anyway, I don't hire no boozers." Stan pleads for any kind of job. The owner takes "pity" on him and offers him the only thing going. "I might have a job you can take a crack at. Of course, it isn't much and I'm not begging you take it. I'll keep you in coffee and cakes, a bottle a day and a place

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If he was alive today, he'd probably turn over in his grave," Sam Goldwyn once was said to have said.

The brief rumbling in the spring of 1998, with word of no less than three redos of his films in the works, might well have been Alfred Hitchcock rotating in his grave—again. Though he left a body of work that stands as unique in film lore, it has been decided by assorted self-styled moviemakers that the master's various productions can be improved upon. None of those producers, directors, writers, and other scavengers have judged that they could not out-Hitch Hitch. To paraphrase Judge Joseph Welch in his berating of Joseph McCarthy in the fifties, "Have they no shame?"

Of the 37 movies in the Hitchcock oeuvre from 1934 to 1975 (we won't even consider the 17 he made in his early years from 1922 to 1933), nearly a dozen have been remade (re-Hitched is the term we prefer) by others for television. A passel of others were redone theatrically. Not a single one can be said to have been worth the effort. Nor were the "sequels"—THE BIRDS II and the three PSYCHOs with Anthony Perkins (or even the deadly TV pilot called BATES MOTEL), on which Sir Alfred most likely would have turned his back.

Hitch, himself, of course redid THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH (1934) in 1956, and put his unique stamp on each version, but never again plowed the same cinema turf. Among theatrical remakes that emerged while he was still alive: the Universal B called STEP DOWN TO TERROR (1958), a dreary exercise purported to be a new version of SHADOW OF A DOUBT (1943), with the less-than-charismatic duo of Charles Drake and Colleen Miller put through their paces by studio hack Harry Keller (also in the cast was Rod Taylor, who at least survived this embarrassment by later starring in 1963's THE BIRDS, so Hitch apparently felt

he was not culpable); the empty-headed ONCE YOU KISS A STRANGER (1969), an equally dreary Warner Bros. redo of STRANGERS ON A TRAIN presided over by studio hack Robert Sparr, posing as a director, and starring Paul Burke (of fifties TV's NAKED CITY and TWELVE O'CLOCK HIGH) in the Farley Granger role and Carol Lynley (!) in the Robert Walker one; this time, it was set not in a tennis milieu but in a golf one. There also were two British-made versions of THE 39 STEPS—one in 1959 with Kenneth More and Taina Elg, the other in 1978 with Robert Powell and Karen Dotrice (along with a top-notch cast of Brits) that was closer to the John Buchan book than to Hitch, and the Hammer Films production of THE LADY VANISHES (1979), with a "screwballish" script by George Axelrod and a cast that included Cybill Shepherd, Elliott Gould, and Angela Lansbury in the Margaret Lockwood, Michael Redgrave, and Dame May Whitty roles. A new STEPS is reportedly being readied for 1999, under the purview of writer/director Robert Towne.

Among television's initial re-Hitchings was the so-so go at SHADOW OF A DOUBT on the LUX VIDEO THEATRE in March 1955. Journeyman director Richard L. Goode called the shots on this version, which teamed Frank Lovejoy and Barbara Rush. James Mason, the series host, would certainly have been better cast as Uncle Charley than bland Lovejoy. TV's next SHADOW OF A DOUBT (1991) had charmless Mark Harmon and no-name Margaret Welsh plodding through the Joseph Cotten and Teresa Wright roles, and was updated to the early 1950s, presumably for the sole conceit of allowing the characters to walk in front of a small town movie house whose marquee trumpeted Hitchcock's STRANGERS ON A TRAIN—and it even cribbed from that classic's famed ending. To show that this SHADOW, adapted by the ubiquitous John Gay, had a



LEFT: Anthony Andrews wasn't an altogether bad choice to play Johnnie Aysgarth in the 1987 television remake of *SUSPICION* (though he looked a bit lonely without his *BRIDESHEAD REVISITED* teddy bear), but someone must have been asleep at the "Hitch" when Jane Curtin was cast as Linda McLaidlaw. Jonathan Lynn played the doomed Beaky. **RIGHT:** Cary Grant, Joan Fontaine, and Nigel Bruce in the 1941 Hitchcock original.

sense of humor, Hitch's onetime leading lady Tippi Hedren was dragged into the proceedings early on, long enough to get bumped off as one of Harmon's victims. If nothing else, this version, directed by Karen Arthur, and the earlier 55-minute production both were a definite step up from *STEP DOWN TO TERROR* of the late fifties

DIAL 'M' FOR MURDER came to TV in 1981, directed by the normally estimable Boris Sagal, who here, together with prolific writer John Gay's script, was pretty slavish to the original, putting his cast (aging sexpot Angie Dickinson, suave Christopher Plummer, "Methodish" Michael Parks, and ever dependable Anthony Quayle) through their paces. Next—despite the fact that it ran nearly three times as long as Sir Alfred's original—came the best non-Hitch Hitch, the two-part British-made *JAMAICA INN* (1985), from Daphne DuMaurier's brooding novel. Jane Seymour starred in this Victorian costumer, with Trevor Eve and Patrick McGeehan (terrific as the licentious squire in the role created by Charles Laughton). Unfortunately, director Lawrence Gordon Clark chose to mask the entire thing in a thick Moors fog for atmosphere, making much of the outdoor proceedings indiscernible. Britain's 1987 nearly scene-for-scene *SUSPICION* somehow ended up on PBS, and boasted—and was done in by—the offbeat casting of *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE*'s Jane Curtin (certainly not the first name to come to mind for the Joan Fontaine role), along with Anthony Andrews, who has turned acting effete into an art, doing Cary Grant. An ear-



lier TV adaptation of *SUSPICION* (LUX VIDEO THEATRE, December 1955), directed by Richard L. Goode, teamed Kim Hunter and Dan O'Herlihy (a last minute replacement for Louis Hayward), with Melville Cooper in the Nigel Bruce role. Hayward at the time was reported to have dropped out claiming the script was not up to his standards—perhaps meaning to indicate that it was telescoped into less than 55 minutes

NOTORIOUS (1992) had John Shea (later to be Lex Luthor to *LOIS AND CLARK*) and Britisher Jenny Robertson struggling mightily with zero magnetism to approach the sexual tension of Grant and Bergman in this update of the Ben Hecht tale. The story now included CIA agents, Russian spies, and sinister arms dealers—and the showing of *REBECCA* at a local Paris art house in front of which the leads linger briefly. Britisher Colin Bucksey directed from a script by Douglas Lloyd McIntosh.

Surprisingly creative—but not really all that great—was the turning in 1993 of Hitch's *LIFEBOAT* of four decades earlier into a futuristic thriller called *LIFEPOD*, with a crew of nine aboard a stranded rescue craft in deep space, bedeviled by a saboteur in their midst. Ron Silver not only played a blind fraud inspector amidst the ensemble cast but also made his directing debut on the ultimately disappointing project.

And in early fall 1996, *STRANGERS ON A TRAIN* was back, this time with a change of gender (Jacqueline Bisset as a celebrity author, playing only halfheartedly, and Theresa

LEFT: Grace Kelly was the victimized wife and Anthony Dawson the killer turned victim in Alfred Hitchcock's only foray into 3D, the clever *DIAL 'M' FOR MURDER* (1954). **RIGHT:** This year's somewhat revised version of *DIAL 'M'* (retitled *A PERFECT MURDER*) starred Gwyneth Paltrow and Michael Douglas.



Russell as an unstable ice queen, essaying the role in the style of a road company Norma Desmond) as well as a change of title to *ONCE YOU MEET A STRANGER*—not to be confused with the earlier incarnation, *ONCE YOU KISS A STRANGER*. Genre director Tommy Lee Wallace also had a hand in manipulating Raymond Chandler and Czenzi Ormonde's original screenplay (all three received writing credit), as adapted by Whitfield Cook. This expensive looking but bankrupt version—lacking only a gag walk-on by Farley Granger as, perhaps, a train conductor or parlor-car waiter—had an evocative Herrmannesque score by Peter Manning Robinson (although it was Tiomkin who did the original), a number of touches lifted from the 1951 classic (watching the murder through the victim's glasses that had fallen to the floor and, later, the dropping of the incriminating cigarette lighter down a sewer drain), and a climactic scene in a disco (the famous El Rey Theater on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles) with the villain(ess) ending up pinned under a falling wagon wheel light fixture rather than an out-of-control merry-go-round. Most annoying: Russell's over-the-top turn as Margo Anthony (in the old Robert Walker role of Bruno Anthony) in a death scene reminiscent of the kind Imogene Coca did better—and funnier—in a long-ago *YOUR SHOW OF SHOWS*.

The much-better-than-average BBC version of *REBECCA*, that aired on PBS' *MASTERPIECE THEATRE* in April 1997, was blessed with having in its cast Dame Diana Rigg, delightfully vile as the sinister Mrs. Danvers, along with Charles Dance and newcomer Emilia Fox as world-weary Maxim de Winter and his much-younger second wife, the shy new mistress of Manderley. Also in the cast: Faye Dunaway as the new Mrs. De Winter's flamboyantly vulgar traveling companion from America, Mrs. Van Hopper (Florence Bates in the Hitchcock film). Directed by Jim O'Brien, this two-part version (a British/German/American coproduction) was reset during the Jazz Age by screenwriter Arthur Hopcraft. The DuMaurier original was published in 1938, and the Hitchcock film of it was set in then-contemporary times (i.e., just before WWII). Other TV *REBECCA* through the years include the 1948 *PHILCO PLAYHOUSE* version, with Bramwell Fletcher, Mary Anderson and Florence Reed; one on *ROBERT MONTGOMERY PRESENTS* in 1950, featuring Peter Cookson, Barbara Bel Geddes, and Edith King, another in 1952 on *BROADWAY TELEVISION THEATRE*, with Scott Forbes and Patricia Breslin (the portrayer of Mrs. Danvers seems to have been lost in time), and an ideally cast production on *THEATER '62*, with James Mason, Joan Hackett, and Nina Foch. And on PBS' *MYSTERY* back in 1980, there was another BBC version—this one with Jeremy Brett (pre-Holmes, of course), Joanna David, and Anna Massey.

Hollywood also provided Anthony Perkins in his final years with steady work as Norman Bates in three belated—and decidedly unnecessary—*PSYCHO* sequels. The first (23 years after Hitch's original) was directed by Richard Franklin, an Aussie adulator of the master, and the second

three years later had Perkins himself in the director's chair. Perkins later admitted in one of his final taped TV interviews that as a director he was in way over his head and simply didn't know what he was doing. The (hopefully) last of the *PSYCHO* sequels came four years after that one, directed by Mick Garris, who frequently works with Stephen King material. Thus one had Perkins as Norman trying to exorcise his demons by recalling to a radio talk-show personality his childhood memories (Henry Thomas of *E.T.* played the young Norman and Olivia Hussey his loony mom).

In NBC's 1987 busted pilot, *BATES MOTEL*, with a bizarre premise of little promise, Bud Cort starred as a wacko who befriends Norman Bates (played by Kurt Paul) in a sanitarium, obtains the creepy old homestead from him, and sets up housekeeping in the off-the-beaten-path joint in preparation for a weekly victim. Mercifully, *BATES MOTEL* was shuttered after a single showing.

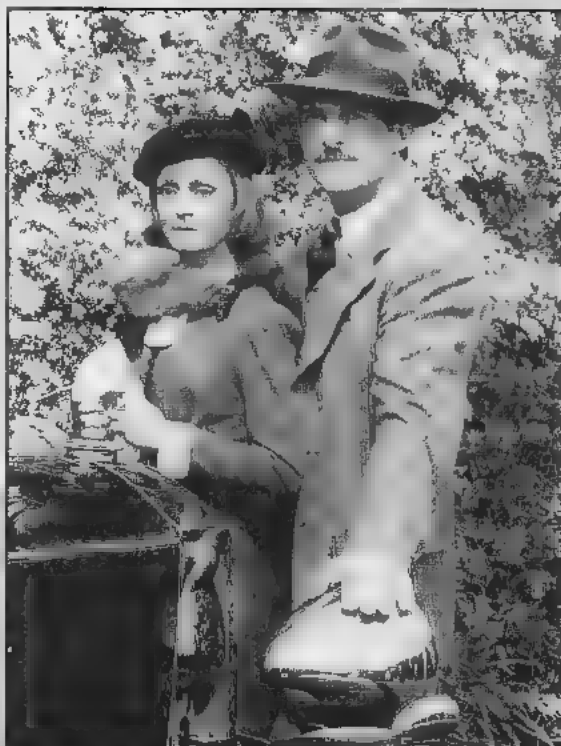
THE BIRDS II: LAND'S END (1994), more or less a re-Hitch of the original (set in Maine this time) than a 30 years later sequel, even had Tippi Hedren in the cast, though in a different, lesser role, of course. The estimable and increasingly beloved Alan Smithee was given director's credit after Rick Rosenthal took his name off.

Hitch's *I CONFESS* (1952) had a second cousin in the 1987 Tommy Lee Jones TV movie *BROKEN VOWS*, in which Jones, as a priest, is forced to go after the killer of a man whose confession he'd just heard. Then he gets involved with the dead man's girlfriend, causing a crisis of conscience. The Hitchcock original was adapted by George Tabori and William Archibald from Paul Anthems's play *OUR TWO CONSCIENCES*, while the later television movie was derived by James Costigan (though screen credit went to a pseudonymous writer) from Dorothy Salisbury Davis' mystery novel *Where the Dark Streets Go* (1969).

The master's masterly *REAR WINDOW* (1954) looked like it had been peered into one time too many by TV actor-turned-writer Douglas Barr, who concocted *FADE TO BLACK* (1993), in which a social anthropologist-turned-snoop (Timothy Busfield) inadvertently videotapes a murder

across his courtyard and finds himself and girlfriend (Heather Locklear) stalked by the killer who has spotted him. This road company though unattributed *WINDOW* even had a wheelchair-bound character (played by Cloris Leachman).

THE 39 STEPS has served over the years as a basis for assorted clones. The most notable rip-offs have been a pair of futuristic concoctions by screenwriter Broderick Miller, dealing somewhat inventively with prisoners in a coded high-tech lockup, who are linked in pairs by computerized collars set to explode if the two separate by more than 100 yards—but whose collars are linked to whom? The first TV movie (in 1991) was Lewis Teague's rather wry *DEAD-LOCK* (subsequently retitled *WEDLOCK*), with Rutger Hauer and Minnie Rogers, out to duck out on sadistic warden Stephen Tobolowsky and recover a cache of diamonds a



Shortly before his phenomenal success as Sherlock Holmes, Jeremy Brett portrayed Maxim De Winter in a BBC production of *REBECCA* (1980). Starring opposite Brett was Joanna David, who, years later, would again costar with him in the last of the Holmes episodes: *THE CARDBOARD BOX* (1994).



LEFT: Alfred Hitchcock often called the original *SHADOW OF A DOUBT* (1943) his personal favorite of his many films. The 1991 remake, which incorporated elements of the Master's *STRANGERS ON A TRAIN* (1951), would not have pleased him. Pictured: William Lanteau, Diane Ladd, Seth Smith, Mark Harmon (as the murderous Uncle Charley), and Bianca Rose. RIGHT: *THE BIRDS II: LAND'S END* (1994) should have been titled *WIT'S END* instead.



jewel thief had stashed on the outside. Then in 1995 writer Miller (and his *DEADLOCK* producer Christine Sacani) reworked the plot into the similarly titled straight action and special effects film, *DEADLOCK. ESCAPE FROM ZONE 14*, with the pair (here Esai Morales and Nia Peebles) now restricted to 50 yards of separation before a possible big boom from their "wedlock" collars.

DIAL 'M' FOR MURDER led of 1998's re-Hitching, but now it's called *A PERFECT MURDER*. Seems modern technology has surpassed Frederick Knott's fifties thriller, and it's well-nigh impossible to dial 'M' on a cell phone, or on any other one with the now obsolete dial. *A PERFECT MURDER* has Michael Douglas gritting his teeth as a natty, nasty Wall Street type (a reference to his earlier role of Gordon Gekko found its way into nearly every reviewer's piece), deciding to do in his much-younger trophy wife (Gwyneth Paltrow)—or rather have her done in—for a sizable monetary consideration, of course, by her part-time bedmate, a downtown NYC artist, played by Viggo Mortensen. These are comparable to the Ray Milland/Grace Kelly/Robert Cummings roles of 35 years earlier. David Suchet, TV's erstwhile Hercule Poirot, is cast as a wily detective in the role played earlier in best stiff upper-lip style by John Williams. *A PERFECT MURDER*, updated from the fifties London of the Hitchcock movie to nineties Manhattan, had the actors fighting not only to make the whole enterprise creditable but also for the attention of the viewer, who was distracted by the ab-fab set design of Douglas and Paltrow's incredibly posh New York penthouse. The director was Andrew Davis, who previously had a modicum of success with the big-screen version of *THE FUGITIVE*.

Next up, *PSYCHO*—a shot-for-shot, line-for-line remake for the 1998 Christmas season in the hands of au courant director Gus Van Sant. Van Sant's reason for scavenging the classic (right down to Saul Bass' unique title logo) with a cast of contemporary actors seems to be that he simply wanted to see the film in color, which Hitch precluded by not even permitting his to be later "colorized." Screaming in the shower this time around is Anne Heche. Julianne Moore has the old Vera Miles role, Viggo Mortensen (in his second consecutive Hitch remake) is in the John Gavin part, William H. Macy has the Martin Balsam detective role, and rock artist Vince Vaughn will appear as dangerously demented Norman B.

A week or so before the theatrical premiere of *PSYCHO* comes a TV retelling of *REAR WINDOW*, contemporized for paralyzed actor Christopher Reeve, who, initial reports

had it, hoped not only to star but also to direct. His doctors doubtless discouraged him from this daunting double task, since he had to be on camera for every single shot. Prolific Jeff Bleckner ended up in the director's chair for this version, which costars Daryl Hannah as the Reeve character's girlfriend and Robert Forster in Wendell Corey's old detective role.

In the pipeline for the remainder of the 20th century along with a prospective new 39 *STEPS*, are yet another remake of *STRANGERS ON A TRAIN*, this time with a mad bomber and a reporter who's on his trail; *SPELLBOUND*, its prospective producer promising it to be light years away from the one that Hitch did in 1945 ("It's not really a remake," he has announced. "There's a psychiatrist, her patient, and the fact that he has amnesia. That's about it."); and a brand new *TO CATCH A THIEF*, which Paramount has announced will be taken from both John Michael Hayes' 1955 screenplay and David Dodge's original novel (Who's to be paired in this version—Leonardo DiCaprio and Calista Flockhart?).

The master's daughter, Pat Hitchcock O'Connell, and her daughter, Katie O'Connell, both apparently have given approval—if, reading between the lines, decidedly only halfhearted—to these assorted latter day re-Hitchings. Sir Alfred's granddaughter was quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* re the Van Sant *PSYCHO*: "I was told that [he] is a big fan of my grandpa's and was interested in doing *PSYCHO* to expose a classic film to a younger generation that won't go see black-and-white films." Bosh! Spielberg's *SCHINDLER'S LIST* (1993), in black-and-white, didn't exactly bomb at the box office. Neither did Scorsese's *RAGING BULL* (1980), nor assorted Woody Allen flicks (1979's *MANHATTAN*, among them).

When it comes down to it, Hitch-ing their wagons to a star, as it were, appears to continue as a cottage industry for filmmakers with attitudes and aspirations of being the next—well, Brian De Palma.



Alvin H. Marill is author of *Movies Made for Television* and its several updates, as well as *The Ultimate John Wayne Trivia Book*, the recently published *The Films of Tommy Lee Jones*, and the forthcoming *Keeping Score*, chronicling film and television composers and scorers. He also has written about such film personalities as Samuel Goldwyn, Robert Mitchum, Edward G. Robinson, and Anthony Quinn, and is *Scarlet Street's* intrepid copy editor.

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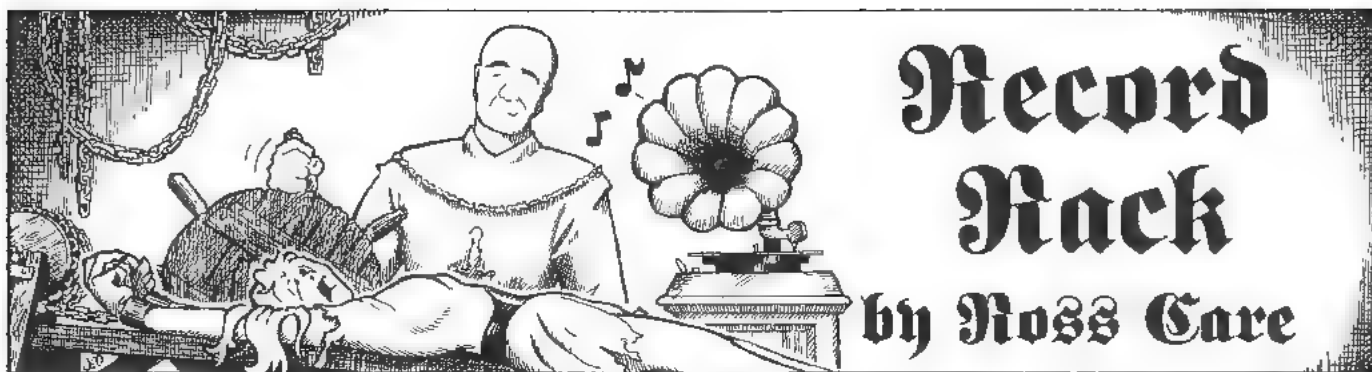
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Appropriately, the subject is Warners, and the new Rhino anthology, **WARNER BROS: 75 YEARS OF FILM MUSIC** (Warners being home to a certain Mr. Fudd, perhaps we should rechristen this edition **WECOWD WACK**.) After a glance down the playlists of this imposing musical overview, it's a bit hard to tell just where to start, so I'll open by saying that as thorough as this anthology is, there's also not a whole lot new in the way of outtakes or rare or previously unheard material. 75 YEARS pretty much sticks to the basics and "greatest hits" (with a definite emphasis on songs) of one of the enduring major players on the Hollywood scene, and offers a voluminous variety of sound bytes from 1927 and Jolson's **THE JAZZ SINGER** to the late nineties and films such as **SPACE JAM** (1996) and **FATHER'S DAY** (1997). On the other hand, the territory covered is so vast and eclectic that only the most compulsive Warners aficionado would

have trouble not finding at least a few surprises here, and some of the tracks (1961's **GAY PURR EF**, 1962's **GYPSY**) are also new to CD.

But let's get down to basics: Rhino splits the Warners musical oeuvre into one disc of "Score" music, and three of "Songs" (1927-1953, 1954-1976, 1977-1997, respectively.) Disc One is a somewhat sporadic overview of orchestral music, from 1938's **THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD** by Erich Wolfgang Korngold, to "Claudia's Theme" from 1992's **UNFORGIVEN** by—hey, wait a minute, Clint Eastwood? Yes, Clint Eastwood, and that leap of faith alone somewhat sets the tone for much that ensues. Between Korngold and Eastwood, as in a kind of musical laboratory of Dr. Frankenstein, we find snippets of everyone from vintage Warner staples such as Max Steiner (1942's **CASABLANCA**, 1959's **A SUMMER PLACE**), to moderns such as Wendy Carlos (1971's **A CLOCKWORK ORANGE**) and Danny Elfman (1989's **BATMAN**).

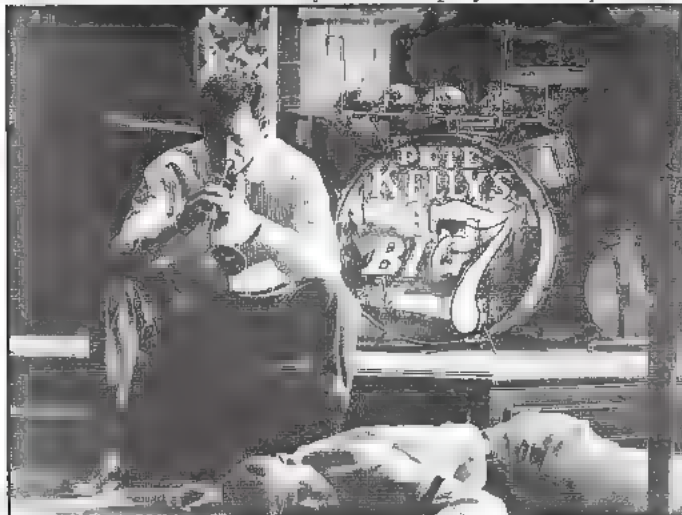
This "anything goes" mood is sustained throughout the next three song discs. Speaking of which, Cole Porter himself is represented here by two tracks, including Cary Grant and the

lovely Ginny Simms doing "You're the Top" from the rather silly Warners bio-flick, **NIGHT AND DAY** (1946), a film which bore only the most nodding of acquaintances with the real life of the sophisticated and very gay Mr. Porter (which could hardly have been filmed in 1946 in any case!)

Disc Two kicks off with another of the greatest songwriters ever to grace Hollywood, Harry Warren, whose career was launched at thirties Warners, from whence he moved on to create some of the best songs and greatest hits (not always the same thing) to come out of the movies. The disc is rounded out by an entertainingly manic Looney Tunes medley that runs the gamut from Rossini and parodied Pop to Raymond Scott and, of course, Carl Stalling. (Bugs Bunny, Elmer Fudd, Porky Pig, and Daffy Duck are prominently featured, but Bea Benaderet all but steals the show as the voice of Little Red Riding Hood.)

And that's not all, folks, not by a long shot. The Looney Tunes ambience lingers on with Disc Three ("Songs, 1954-1976"), which commences with Garland's classic "The Man That Got Away" from **A STAR IS BORN** (1954) and ends with a track from the unfortunate 1974

LEFT: Jack Webb is best known as the creator and star of **DRAGNET**, of course, but in many respects his heart belonged to jazz. Webb's baby was a show called **PETE KELLY'S BLUES**, which he tried unsuccessfully to launch as a radio program, a television show, and (as pictured here) a 1955 motion picture. Fans were more interested in getting the facts, just the facts, from Sergeant Joe Friday. **RIGHT:** Another TV icon's first starring role in films was as **THE INCREDIBLE MR. LIMPET** (1964). Don Knotts spent most of his time underwater as a cartoon fish, but that didn't stop the more sexually astute kiddies in the audience from gleaming the true meaning of the character's name. As always, Knotts played a milquetoast who has heroism thrust upon him.





LEFT AND RIGHT: If part of being a movie star is a willingness to let yourself look ridiculous, then Bette Davis certainly lived up to the requirements for **WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?** (1962). Here, accompanied by Victor Buono, *The Divine Miss D* performs "I'm Writing a Letter to Daddy." It's not part of the new Warners collection, but the rare title-song single is, and it's a bizarre delight **BELOW:** Judy Garland in *A STAR IS BORN* (1954).

film of *MAME*, "Bosom Buddies," followed rather drolly by (no kidding) "Something He Can Feel" (from 1976's *SPARKLE*). Between these disparate musical points we move somewhat jarringly from numbers such as two key jazz tracks (by Peggy Lee and Ella Fitzgerald) from the odd but compelling *PETE KELLY'S BLUES* (1955) and Henry Mancini's always moving "Days of Wine and Roses" (from the 1962 film of the same name) to camp classics such as Bette—no, not Midler, though she could—but Ms. Bette Davis singing (sort of) Frank DeVol's always unbelievable "What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?" (from the 1962 you-know-what of the same name) and Mr. Don Knotts performing "I Wish I Were A Fish" from *THE INCREDIBLE MR. LIMPET* (1964). On the latter, a Sammy Fain tune used only briefly in the film but released as the single heard here, Don is backed up by the redoubtable Thurl Ravenscroft, who seems to be having a CD revival of sorts this year, having also just been heard from on the recent *CLASSIC DISNEY VOLUME V* disc, on the "Everybody Wants To Be A Cat" track from *THE ARISTOCATS* (1970).

Disc Four veers sharply out of the Warner Bros. universe, at least as I knew and loved it, and into awful eighties and nauseous nineties, way, way beyond Thunderdome and into the wonderfully grim world of contemporary "Top of the Pops" movie songs. More hits here, than on any previous disc, however, (from Eddie Rabbit to Seal!) remind us that after their acquisition of Atlantic Records in 1968, Warners—by then Warner Bros./Seven Arts—became a major player in the recording, as well

as the motion picture business. But what goes round, comes round (whatever that means) and all ends in happy cross-generational coexistence with a forties track from a very nineties movie, the late, great Johnny Mercer doing the Arlen/Mercer classic, "Ac-cent tchu-ate The Positive" from last year's slick *L. A. CONFIDENTIAL*.

75 YEARS OF FILM MUSIC is an entertaining, if perhaps disorientingly eclectic anthology, and maybe about 20 years too many, at least for this guy's admittedly retro tastes. Rhino gives you your money's worth here, but after time-tripping from *THE NUN'S STORY* (1959) to the "Overture" from *GYPSY*—"How do you like them eggrolls, Mr. Goldstone?"—through to the *DIRTY HARRY* (1972) Main Title, and those darn "Dueling Banjos" (from 1972's *DELIVERANCE*), I felt a bit like Rod Taylor when *THE TIME MACHINE* goes temporarily berserk, nearly giving old Rod a "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" (Disc One, Track 11, *BONNIE AND CLYDE*, 1967, Flatt and Scruggs, #7 Country album, #12 Pop album, #55 Pop single, etc., etc. . . . Detailed chart ratings are included for most of the titles.)

Well, you get the picture—the Warner Bros. picture, tah-dah, so at any rate it's usually great, as is much of the music. A deluxe 80 page booklet with great graphics is included in this classily packaged boxed set. Indeed, the liner notes are virtually a substantial text in themselves, providing fascinating details on the legendary Warners music department and its composers and personnel. Especially welcome are comments from and on the rarely discussed Ray Hemdorf, who joined Warners in 1931 and served as studio music director from 1948 to 1959. Serious film music aficionados may wish that the territory covered so thoroughly in these profuse notes was more generously represented on the discs themselves, which, in their three-to-one ratio of songs to underscoring, are obviously stacked on the side of

the more commercial pop tracks. The book concludes with a useful (and probably necessary!) two-page alphabetical index of the 80 plus score cues and songs.



Ross Care has finally taken that California trip they're always singing about, and so, before the Big One strikes, he'd love to hear from Scarlet Street readers. E Mail him at ross.compose@hotmail.com

Dark Passages: The World of Film Noir

Scarlet Street #29 featured the first part of our mini-review section on classic (and several not quite classic) *film noir*. Here are some more dark, rain-swept looks at a few respected films that are representative of the various periods in the development of *noir*.

SUSPICION (1941)

Johnnie Aysgarth (Cary Grant), a likable lay-about who makes a living borrowing from friends and gambling at the track, woos and marries shy and unsuspecting Lina McLaidow (Joan Fontaine, who won the Oscar for Best Actress). Soon after their marriage, Johnnie's true nature begins to manifest. He expresses honest and slightly befuddled surprise at Lina's suggestion that employment is preferable to borrowing. As time goes by, Lina learns more of her husband's true nature. She discovers that he has been fired from his job for embezzlement. The police inform her that Johnnie's best friend, Beaky (Nigel Bruce), has died under mysterious circumstances during a weekend business trip with Johnnie. She learns that Johnnie has made inquiries about taking an advance on his wife's life insurance. During a dinner party, Johnnie expresses an intense interest in the identification of an untraceable poison . . .

Ultimately, on a drive along a perilous ocean-side road, Johnnie tries to push Lina out of the car—or does he? Actually, he was reaching over to close her door, which had sprung open! Johnnie explains all to Lina . . . his feelings of worthlessness, his love for her. The poison was for his own suicide, not her murder! Together, the couple drives into the sunset, resolved to make things right. At least, that's how the Hollywood powers that be, who wanted a happy ending, saw it.

Alfred Hitchcock's *SUSPICION* may initially confuse the *noir* fan. The first half plays almost like a classic Cary Grant romantic comedy. Grant is in top form: breezy, articulate, cheerful. The second half takes a 180 degree turn, as we watch Lina uncovering Johnnie's darker side. The first indication that all is not as it seems comes with a visit from Beaky, who fills a glass with brandy and starts to drink it down. The glass falls from his hand and he collapses, gasping. Johnnie watches with absolutely no expression, eyes dead cold, his face a frozen, emotionless mask. When Lina asks

Contributions by John F. Black
Ken Hanke
Barry Monush
Jerry Renshaw
Michael Spampinato



him to help Johnnie's expression changes to one of extreme distaste, and he observes that Beaky will either come out of it on his own or die. The emotions Grant displays in this scene create a powerful foundation on which the remainder of the film rests.

Lina's suspicions about Johnnie increase with each revelation. As she starts to question his acts, Johnnie's carefree lies gradually give way to hostility. Grant plays this uncharacteristic role brilliantly. Johnnie is someone whose charm has always seen him through, but he has been thrust into a foreign world where his words are questioned and his good-natured jests have no place.

And the ending? Hitchcock wanted Johnnie to be guilty, as he was in the 1932 source material novel *Before the Fact* by Francis Iles—and maybe he got his wish. Ostensibly, the ending clears Johnnie of Beaky's supposed murder and his desire to poison his wife. On reflection, though, as the car with the happy couple drives off, one realizes that Johnnie has lived a life in which lies have become his truth. Are we now to accept his final explanation as truth, or does suspicion remain?

—Michael Spampinato

MINISTRY OF FEAR (1944)

Fritz Lang was made for film noir. Like the ax was made for the turkey. Indeed, Lang was *noir* long before there ever was such a thing, so it's something of a surprise to find his WWII Nazi spy-ring thriller, *MINISTRY OF FEAR*, such a deceptively lightweight work—at least if we go no further than the surface. Adapted from the popular novel by Graham Greene, the storyline contains *noir* aplenty with an added twist. This time we have not only a protagonist (Ray Milland) thrust into a series of strange and incriminating events, but a protagonist who has just been released from an asylum for the criminally insane for the mercy killing of his wife. As a result, he already has a couple strikes against him when he tries to establish not just his innocence, but the lucidity of anything he says.

Instead of creating a world that is wholly grim and dark, Lang's film is built upon a series of coincidences—some manufactured, some genuine—and a plethora of amusing characters. But this is a mere smokescreen, because these amusing eccentrics are every bit as lethal as the most hardened street thug. This approach starts almost at once. Milland, killing time at a local carnival while waiting for a train, inadvertently offers the password for winning a prize cake. He then finds himself on a train with a seemingly friendly blind man, who soon turns out to be neither friendly nor blind, but a spy after the cake in question. The blind man—and the cake's—participation comes to an abrupt halt when an enemy bomb blows them both up. Similarly, a more or less comic seance presided over by femme fatale Hilary Brooke turns anything but comic when Dan Duryea, as a very effeminate (and British!) tailor in attendance, is apparently murdered and Milland is implicated. But in *MINISTRY OF FEAR*, nothing—or precious little—is what it seems and... well, telling more would rob the uninitiated of the murky delights of following Lang's twisted melodrama on their own, and that would be a great pity, indeed.

Ken Hanke

THEY LIVE BY NIGHT (1948)

Nicholas Ray began his prestigious cinematic career by directing his own adaptation of Edward Anderson's novel *Thieves Like Us* (1937). Retitled *THEY LIVE BY NIGHT*, the 1949 film was released in the same year as another classic romantic *noir*, Joseph H. Lewis' *GUN CRAZY*. Only a year earlier, the male leads of *THEY LIVE BY NIGHT* and *GUN CRAZY*, Farley Granger and John Dall, had played lovers in Alfred Hitchcock's *ROPE*.

THEY LIVE BY NIGHT opens with images of the innocent-appearing Granger and Cathy O'Donnell, accompanied by the subtitles "This boy... and this girl... were never properly introduced to the world we live in." Despite their rapturous gazes at one another, the underlying tone is one of inevitable tragedy.

Bowie (Granger) has escaped from prison with two other convicts during the Depression. He meets Keechie (O'Donnell) when the men hide out with her father. She seems hard-edged and laconic, taking scant pleasure from her life.

The two hesitatingly begin a romance of convenience, which gradually deepens into love. The couple eventually marry at a roadside wedding chapel, as they try to forge a life of their own apart from the two career criminals.

The spectre of Bowie's past murder conviction continues to govern their movements, however. An acquaintance reveals their whereabouts to the authorities, in exchange for her own husband's clemency. Bowie is fatally shot down by police officers, leaving behind his grieving, pregnant wife.

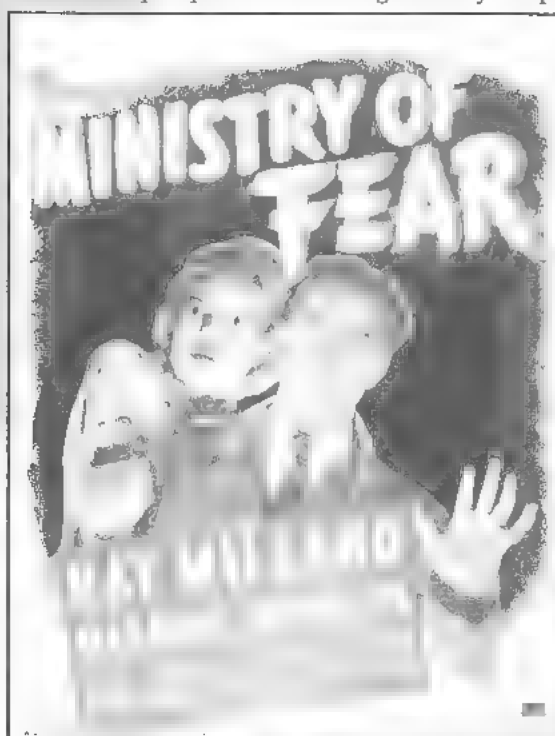
Although it is ostensibly a crime drama, director Ray maintains his focus on the developing relationship between Bowie and Keechie. Life has been tough on them both, including maternal absence. But they are not the hard-boiled, embittered characters found in most *noirs*.

The film takes the moral middle ground. Bowie's questionable past is never justified or forgotten, but we still hope that the couple can successfully establish a new life together. Ironically, their betrayal comes from the woman

who trades them for a chance to reestablish her own relationship with her incarcerated spouse.

Farley Granger and Cathy O'Donnell are both excellent in their portrayals of tenacious optimism in the face of impending peril. O'Donnell, in particular, contributes a more forceful performance than most directors asked of her. She customarily enacted "nice" girls and/or victims in such diverse films as *THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES* (1946), *TERROR IN THE HAUNTED HOUSE* (1958), and *BEN-HUR* (1959). At first surprisingly callous, her characterization gradually sheds its alienation. O'Donnell and her director offer us an unconventional *noir* female protagonist—she's neither a homicidally inclined wife, nor a gold-digging gun moll.

THEY LIVE BY NIGHT resides in the pantheon of the cinematic crime tradition, with subplots involving bank robbery and prison escape. But the focus remains on the ebb and flow of Keechie's naive relationship with Bowie. As such, the picture stands apart from many of its film *noir* brethren. The doomed romanticism, exemplified by a man's refusal to aid the couple in fleeing to Mexico ("I



PAGE 58: Alfred Hitchcock placed a lightbulb in the milk to make it the focus of attention in this scene from *SUSPICION* (1941). Even the ever-suave Cary Grant had trouble upstaging it. BELOW: Charlie Chan (Sidney Toller) made two memorable forays into film noir territory with *THE SHANGHAI COBRA* (1945) and *DARK ALIBI* (1946). RIGHT: Cathy O'Donnell and Farley Granger starred in *THEY LIVE BY NIGHT* (1949), the first film version of Edward Anderson's novel *Thieves Like Us*. PAGE 61 LEFT: Victor Mature finally gets the upper hand on Laird Cregar in the closing moments of *I WAKE UP SCREAMING* (1941)—not, by the way, a biopic of Lisa Marie Presley's marriage to Michael Jackson. PAGE 61 RIGHT: *RIDE THE PINK HORSE* (1947) was a much more successful stab at film noir for Robert Montgomery than *LADY IN THE LAKE* (1946).

won't sell you hope when there ain't any") as memorable as the nihilism which permeates other classics of the genre.

—John F. Black

SCARLET STREET (1945)

"No good deed goes unpunished" seems to be the message of this surprisingly bleak reunion of the cast and director of *THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW*. Edward C. Robinson comes to the rescue of Joan Bennett as she's being slapped around on a Greenwich Village street corner late one evening by boyfriend Jan Duryea, at his most unctuous. Robinson doesn't realize that Bennett is a tramp with a capital "T" and falls prey to her scheme to and herself better living quarters than her current dump. Bennett relishes the hold she has over the hopelessly smitten Robinson, who is pitifully henpecked at home by a wife who doesn't appreciate his sideline interest in painting. In time



Duryea comes up with the despicable idea of selling Robinson's amateur artwork behind his back and putting Bennett's name on it. The resultant good fortune is fleeting and it is not long before a sorry ending comes about for each of the principals.

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Barry Monush



DARK PASSAGE (1947)

The pairing of Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall has given us three of our most enduring films: *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT* (1944), *THE BIG SLEEP* (1946), and *KEY TO RANSOM* (1948). While lacking the passion breadth, the complexity of these better-known pictures, *DARK PASSAGE* remains a tight, tidy film peppered with interesting characters, played against a San Francisco setting.

Vincent Parry (Bogart) wrongfully accused of killing his wife escapes from San Quentin. Given sanctuary by Irene Janson (Bacall), Parry has his face altered by plastic surgery, giving him time to sort out the truth behind his wife's murder.

The plot is sufficiently convoluted to keep you guessing, but important elements are, at times, too simplistic and contrived. When Parry, having just escaped from San Quentin, hitches a ride, a news flash comes over the radio telling of Parry's escape. In the space of a very few minutes, Parry knocks the driver (Clifton Young) unconscious and Irene appears from nowhere to help him. She just happened to have been in the area and heard the news flash and figured she'd find Parry—well, just where she finds him. The whole matter is explained away in a couple of lines and that's that. Further into the film, we learn that Irene's passion for helping Parry stems from her father being falsely accused of killing his wife (her stepmother). Again, a few simple lines explain it all, allowing the story to continue with no further thought to the hows and whys.

Beyond Bogart and Bacall's classically strong turns, some real performance gems are embedded in the matrix. Standing out is Agnes Moorehead's portrayal of Madge Rapi, a femme fatale of the best, or worst, kind, stridently demanding, cocky, and the real root of Parry's problems. Dressed and styled in the cutting edge of fashion, she almost screams color in the film's black and white world. She is so deliciously evil in her final scene (think *Brigid O'Shaughnessy's* "You don't love me" thrice magnified) that you can't help but grin at her fate.

Look also for Tom D'Andrea, who did this post-Max as the streetwise, refreshingly breezy cab driver who befriends Parry and introduces him to plastic surgeon Dr. Walter Coley (House of Stevenson). Stevenson's character has a touch of Lugosi's Dr. Richard Von in from *THE RAVEN* (1935); he's a surgeon who has devised his own techniques and seems to delight in reminding his patients that he can make them look like a bull dog or a monkey. He combines this with a touch of the more clinical, professional, doctor of a Herbert Rawlinson's Dr. Boris Grigor in *Ed Wood's* *JAIL BAIT* (1954).

Someone must have been paying attention to the Inner Sanctum films of the same period, as Reginald Le Borg's technique in *CALLING DR. DEATH* (1944), Parry's



pre-surgery scenes are all shot subjectively, from the camera's (Parry's) perspective. Under the surgeon's anesthesia, Parry falls prey to those "rick lens, multi-image" dream sequences so beloved at the liner's whim. About 40 minutes into the film, we finally see Bogart's face, swathed in Mummy-like bandages but quite recognizable.

While an overall solid and very enjoyable noir entry, *DARK PASSAGE*'s main flaw comes in the final scene. As a rule, films *not* leave us slightly drained, making our own conclusions and examining our own thoughts. *DARK PASSAGE*'s final scene takes a wrong turn into the light of pure romance and happy endings. It's just too marvelous, too marvelous for words.

Michael Spampinato

THE GLASS KEY (1942)

Admirers of the Coen Brothers, coming on this film for the first time, are apt to be surprised to see just where John and Ethan filched the storyline for *MILLER'S CROSSING* (1990). The two plots are just too similar to be coincidental (and the Coens are too cinematically savvy not to know this fact). While I'll readily admit that *MILLER'S CROSSING* is the much more stylish of the two (well, Joel Coen is a much better director than Stuart Heisler), and boasts a series of dynamite set pieces that are missing from *THE GLASS KEY*, the earlier film is the real McNarr, and its rather day-for-night scene hinges else again. (One of the joys of the Coens' better films is that the people in them talk like movie characters, but remain believable within the world of the film. The characters in *THE GLASS KEY* just seem wholly believable in their time frame, not in a self-contained world.)

THE GLASS KEY, adapted from Dashiell Hammett's '31 novel and previously filmed in 1935 (an almost unseen and virtually inaccessible film these days), is fairly obviously a budget-minded affair to cash in on the success of *THIS GUN FOR HIRE* (1942) and the screen chemistry of Alan Ladd and Veronica Lake. (Cynically, Brian Donlevy, playing a variation on his Great McCarty character, gets top billing. The sets have that lived-in and redressed look. Music for a society party is lifted from a scene in the previous year's *THE LADY EVE*. Piano music backing one of the film's best-known scenes is the old Rautavaara/Rosin tune, "Walkin' the Floor," from *FOUR FOURS TO KILL* (1935). And so on. But none of this matters, except as concerns its pedigree. The results are fast and fresh and fascinatingly perverse, even if mostly by suggestion. The film goes as far as it can in the homo-erotic undercurrents of the relationship between Ladd and Donlevy, even if it ultimately does opt for a Hollywood happy ending with Ladd and Lake ending up together as a sad, able romantic pair (an astonishing thing in that Ladd is



PAGE 58: Alfred Hitchcock placed a lightbulb in the milk to make it the focus of attention in this scene from *SUSPICION* (1941). Even the ever-suave Cary Grant had trouble upstaging it. BELOW: Charlie Chan (Sidney Toller) made two memorable forays into *film noir* territory with *THE SHANGHAI COBRA* (1945) and *DARK ALIBI* (1946). RIGHT: Cathy O'Donnell and Farley Granger starred in *THEY LIVE BY NIGHT* (1949), the first film version of Edward Anderson's novel *Thirties Like Us*. PAGE 61 LEFT: Victor Mature finally gets the upper hand on Laird Cregar in the closing moments of *I WAKE UP SCREAMING* (1941)—not, by the way, a biopic of Lisa Marie Presley's marriage to Michael Jackson. PAGE 61 RIGHT: *RIDE THE PINK HORSE* (1947) was a much more successful stab at *film noir* for Robert Montgomery than *LADY IN THE LAKE* (1946).

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John F. Black

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Crassly directed by Fritz Lang, *SCARLET STREET* features a standout performance by Bennett (along with *WOMAN IN THE WINDOW*, it was one of her personal favorites) as the kind of manipulative, selfish bitch audiences just love to hiss. Defying the standard preconceptions of the *noir* genre, its central plot does not hinge on a premeditated crime, and features no hard-boiled detectives or murder mystery. No gun is so much as seen during the course of its storyline. Nobody plots anyone else's demise. Duryea's theft of Robinson's art is nothing more than a callous, sudden whim. The latter act does not even constitute a crime in that Robinson, having found out that the work has been purchased and given a gallery showing, is delighted, properly reasoning that the attractive young Bennett got the canvases the attention they wouldn't have warranted otherwise.

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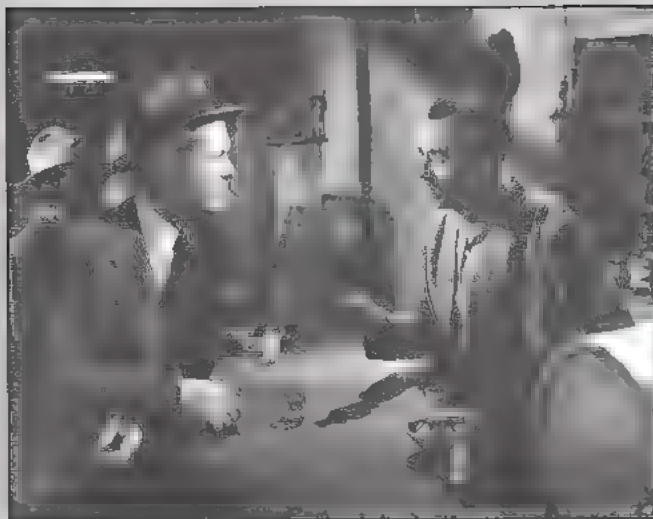
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Look also for Tom D'Andrea, who died this past May, as the streetwise, refreshingly breezy cab driver who befriends Parry and introduces him to plastic surgeon Dr. Walter Coley (Houseley Stevenson). Stevenson's character has a touch of Lugosi's Dr. Richard Vollin from *THE RAVEN* (1935); he is a surgeon who has devised his own techniques and seems to delight in reminding his patients that he can make them look like a bulldog or a monkey. He combines this with a touch of the more clinical, professional demeanor of Herbert Rawlinson's Dr. Boris Gregor in Ed Wood's *JAIL BAIT* (1954).

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LEFT Gloria Grahame was to film noir what Fred Astaire was to dance. Here, she's paired with Bogie in the unjustly neglected *IN A LONELY PLACE* (1950). **RIGHT:** Lee Marvin has just received a faceful of scalding coffee from Gloria, who earlier had been on the receiving end in *THE BIG HEAT* (1953). The film was good to the last drop.

quite ready to let the innocent Lake hang in order to save his friend Donlevy in the previous scene). The film's familial relationships are, to say the least, peculiar on both sides of society—the rich seem to have their share of strange relatives just as much as the poorer class! All of this is served up rather amusingly, though, so it can best be described as tastefully perverse.

Probably the most notable aspect of the film historically is its introduction of William Bendix (his first such characterization) as the utterly perverted and sadistic Jeff, a catch-all henchman who obviously gets a singularly unwholesome degree of satisfaction out of beating up Alan Ladd! It is a chilling, unsettling, wholly *noirish* characterization that sticks in the mind long after the roughhouse comedy of Donlevy and the romantic banter of Ladd and Lake. It also affords Heisler one of the few truly stylish moments in the film when Bendix brutally murders Joseph Calleia, finishing the job in a sweat-drenched closeup, muttering, "I'm just a good-natured slob—take everything from anyone and never do anything about it." As a single moment, it is *noir* at its essence.

—Ken Hanke

THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS (1946)

Most films of the *noir* genre concern disenfranchised people with nebulous pasts. We usually aren't afforded the opportunity of witnessing the events that helped formulate their world-weary demeanor.

THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS begins its story in 1928. Embittered teenager Martha Ivers (Janis Wilson) attempts to run away from her wealthy but domineering aunt (Judith Anderson), for whose family the city of Iverstown is named. But Martha and her boyfriend Sam Masterson (Darryl Hickman) are apprehended. Martha is remanded to her aunt's custody. One stormy night, accompanied by her tutor's son, Walter O'Neil (Mickey Kunn), Martha kills the old woman. Sam Masterson, who was also in the Ivers house that night, skips town to avoid a stint in reform school. Walter and his fortune-hunting father provide an alibi for the girl, but the price for the O'Neils' compliance is an unspoken promise of future betrothal.

MARTHA IVERS then picks up the trail 18 years later. The adult Martha (Barbara Stanwyck) has inherited the Iverstown legacy from her murdered aunt and holds court as its most prominent citizen. Her husband, the grown-up Walter O'Neil (Kirk Douglas), has become a district attorney. He has also become an alcoholic. Theirs is a contractual marriage built upon a dubious foundation of shared guilt. Their barely functioning existence is threatened by the chance return of Sam Masterson (Van Heflin). He has

survived as an itinerant gambler. Martha and Walter suspect that he intends to blackmail them over the old murder and its subsequent coverup. Ironically, Sam doesn't actually possess that knowledge, but, always the savvy opportunist, he is soon able to deduce their secret.

With such a formidable cast, most directors would have contented themselves with focusing on the central characters as adults. Their past histories would have been revealed either through flashbacks or passages of expository dialogue. But Lewis Milestone has carefully depicted youthful events that display the uneasy triangular relationship among the three. The same insecurities that defined the latter stage of their adolescence are clearly manifested in their unanticipated reunion. The fateful paths of their adult lives seem more poignant for having witnessed their juvenile indiscretions. Martha's ruthlessness, Walter's smarmy opportunism, and Sam's wanderlust are all qualities foreshadowed by Milestone's portrayal of their teenage interactions.

A later classic of the *noir* genre, *GUN CRAZY* (1949), also provides a portrait of adolescence to deepen our knowledge of the protagonist. We are shown a lad who displays a simultaneous attraction/repulsion for the power of a gun. Years later, he will become a bank robber. *THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS* is another such film, one which forcefully delineates the background of its central characters. The culmination of their lives is no less dramatic for its finely crafted inevitability.

—John F. Black

RIDE THE PINK HORSE (1947)

However Robert Montgomery conned MGM into letting him make his experimental, all subjective (well, nearly all subjective) directorial debut with *LADY IN THE LAKE*, the approach mustn't have borne fruit a second time. His next film, *RIDE THE PINK HORSE*, was made for Universal-International—probably on the proviso that it was *not* to be done with a first-person camera. And it wasn't, but an old contrarian like Montgomery had more than one experimental trick up his sleeve. If Universal was expecting a traditional thriller, it didn't get it. Instead, they were handed a ridiculously convoluted story (though one presumes someone had read the Ben Hecht/Charles Lederer script, so that was possibly no surprise) that eschewed traditional romance, wrapped up in an impossibly florid film.

Right away, Montgomery goes out of his way to illustrate that he has no intention of delivering an ordinary film. The opening sequence is a highly choreographed three and a half minute take following Montgomery as he arrives in San Pablo (a town that, while vaguely Mexican,

also seems strangely Americanized, fixed in no clear geographical point). He gets off the bus, looks around, goes into the bus terminal, removes a gun and a small piece of paper from a briefcase, rents a locker, puts the paper in it, buys chewing gum and uses a wad of it to hide the key behind a map on the wall, etc. Nothing that comes after this opening is quite so elaborately conceived, but neither does Montgomery run out of style. His camera constantly prowls the streets of the town, the shadowy bars, and, most notably, the cheesy little carnival that houses the crude marry-go-round boasting the pink horse of the title. To his credit, Montgomery never allows the picturesque to outweigh or overbalance the film's bitingly cynical *noir* tone.

The script itself is a fascinating mix of postwar cynicism (slightly sugarcoated in ultimate patriotism and conscience) and the more perverse elements of *noir*. Montgomery is utterly in his element as the world-weary Lucky Gagin, who can't quite escape his own romanticism. On the one hand, he is championing the man who stole his fiancée. ("He's okay. He's got what it takes—dough.") On the other, he plays knight errant to Wanda Hendrix's sympathetic Indian girl (the other women in the film are invariably predatory or duplicitous) in a relationship that manages to be wistful without ever becoming mawkish and which, blessedly, never turns into a Hollywoodized romance. Fred Clark's arch villain is a classic of *noir*—a wonderful "Mr. Big" boasting an elaborate hearing aid that affords him the marvelous shtick of talking into telephones with the earpiece pressed to the box on his chest! Art Smith makes a nifty federal investigator, even if his character tends to be the script's mouthpiece of patriotism. The characters and approach add up to a most unusual and unfairly overlooked film that is well worth discovering.

—Ken Hanke

SUDDEN FEAR (1952)

David Miller's *SUDDEN FEAR* finds Myra Hudson (Joan Crawford), a wealthy and successful San Francisco playwright, sitting in on a rehearsal for her latest play, ironically titled *HALFWAY TO HEAVEN*. Actor Lester Blaine (Jack Palance) has almost landed the lead when Myra rejects him for not looking romantic enough. Some time later, Blaine bumps into Myra on a train trip—and romance follows.

We get our first insight into Lester when Myra invites him to a party. He doesn't show and, after two hours of worrying, Myra drives to his rooms. Watching her car pull up, Lester takes his suitcases and walks down the stairs, timing his exit to Myra's entrance. She questions him and he replies, "I don't belong in your world . . . you have so much and I have nothing." Soon after, Lester and Myra are married. At the reception party they are introduced to Irene Neves (Gloria Grahame), a guest of lawyer and friend Junior Kearney (Michael Connors billed here as "Touch" Connors). That night Lester meets Irene at her apartment. There is obviously a history between them.

Lester and Myra's marriage is apparently idyllic. Lester's an ideal husband, gentle, doting, and attentive. Myra receives Lester's attention with undisguised happiness. Before a bridge party, Myra meets with lawyer Steve Kearney (Bruce Bennett, Crawford's husband in the 1945 *MIL-DRED PIERCE*). Kearney brings a new will, allowing

Lester only \$10,000 a year for life or until he gets married. Myra disagrees and, rather than signing the document, makes her own changes in favor of Lester, speaking them into a Dictaphone. Myra accidentally leaves the machine on, and it records a passionate meeting between Lester and Irene later that evening. Listening to the recording, Myra hears them finding the original will and planning her murder before Kearney's changes can go into effect. Myra methodically sets about devising Lester and Irene's undoing while continuing to play the loving wife.

From this point on, *SUDDEN FEAR* is almost non-stop tension. Skillfully manipulating circumstances, Myra foils Lester and Irene's first murder scheme. Conversations between Lester and Myra remain outwardly the same, but Crawford, in an Oscar-nominated performance, makes it clear with every gesture and intonation that Myra is fighting for her life, while Palance (also nominated) conveys a man constantly on the edge of losing his self-control.

Myra's survival plan is formulated to the last detail, each step written out on paper to a precise timetable. With a ticking clock as the primary sound effect, she flawlessly performs each step of her plan . . . in her mind. In this, *SUDDEN FEAR* is almost a *noir* version of the 1948 Preston Sturges comedy *UNFAITHFULLY YOURS*, in which conductor Rex Harrison musically imagines several ways to kill wife Linda Darnell.

Also like the Sturges film, at the appointed time, when Myra begins in earnest, her plot goes completely awry—but not comically so. Small details glossed over in her imagining become major obstacles as her plan rapidly disintegrates and she ends up literally running for her life . . .

—Michael Spampinato



PURPLE NOON (1960)

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Film *noir* goes to Italy by way of France, in *PURPLE NOON* (*PLEIN SOLEIL*), a straightforward look at the demonic behavior of a pretty young man played by a very pretty, young Alain Delon. Based on the novel *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955) by Patricia High-

smith (although the on-screen credit calls it simply *Monsieur Ripley*) and directed by René Clément, this breathtakingly photographed color film is as matter of fact in its presentation of crime as its protagonist is in causing it. Delon's Tom Ripley is a murderer with seemingly no sense of conscience, who happens to kill the man (Maurice Ronet) who appears to be his closest, if not only, friend.

Quickly summed up in the opening sequence is the premise that Mr. Ripley has been sent to Europe by the father of Philippe Greenleaf (Ronet), to coax his son to abandon his idle lifestyle and return home. The pair instead have bonded and left the old man's wishes behind, cavorting about on an Italian holiday in the company of Greenleaf's jealous love interest, Marge (Marie Laforet). Ripley, sensing a dent in this comfortable male camaraderie, schemes to cause a rift between the volatile couple, successfully splitting them apart.

This done, the two men go sailing and discuss theoretically how easily it would be for Ripley to dispose of Philippe. During a game of cards, Ripley does just that, abruptly stabbing his stunned friend in the chest with a knife. There follows a terrifically staged sequence as the sea around them becomes increasingly turbulent and



LEFT: Having given widely praised performances in *THE LOST WEEKEND* (1945), Howard Da Silva and Doris Dowling were reteamed in *THE BLUE DAHLIA* (1946), starring Alan Ladd. RIGHT: Joan Bennett (pictured with Margaret Lindsay) was a femme fatale to die for in the Fritz Lang classic *SCARLET STREET* (1945).

Ripley tries calmly and methodically, amid the uncooperative weather, to tie the body up, throw it overboard, and sink it into the ocean. Back on shore the cold and remorseless killer practices his deceased buddy's handwriting in order to abstract money from his savings and keep up the façade that Philippe is still alive. The whole charade pretty much works, as Ripley casually goes back and forth between being himself and passing himself off as Philippe, all the while keeping Marge and the police frantic in trying to locate Philippe's whereabouts.

Although there is money in mind, Ripley appears to be less motivated by riches than the sheer pleasure of the game of deception. This gives the character an extra chilly layer and Delon's aloof portrayal is more than adequate in achieving this sense of distance. He is also a sight to see, captured at the peak of his beauty, arrogantly lounging about, often sans shirt, in the role that pretty much set him on the road to stardom in his native country. (A remake under the novel's original title is scheduled for release in 1999 and one can only hope that star Matt Damon is photographed so lovingly.)

Pretty much missing from the movie is the underlying suggestion of Ripley's closeted homosexuality, his attraction to his friend and the possibility that the evaporation of their relationship is a factor in driving Ripley to murder. The filmic Ripley actually stoops to bedding Marge in an effort to claim the late Philippe's inheritance, whereas the literary Ripley expressed a revulsion towards the woman whose love for Philippe (Dickie in the novel) was never reciprocated. While the film unfortunately dilutes this tantalizing subtext, it does at least provide the satisfying ending that the novel does not, supplying a moralistic coda that, for once, is actually more fully justified than literature's more cynical one.

Barry Monush

IN A LONELY PLACE (1950)

Most of the films made by Humphrey Bogart's Santana Productions were quite frankly substandard affairs, but Nicholas Ray's *IN A LONELY PLACE* is the happy—if that's a word that can be used in connection with this disturbing, resonant, and rather odd picture—exception. Cynical is too mild a description for the grittiness of the film, and yet it's also a film of great emotional depth, owing to the incisive characterizations—both as written and played. Few films are as daring in their presentation of characters with so much obvious background complexity—some explored, some merely hinted at—as *IN A LONELY PLACE*. Almost no film of its time went anywhere near this far—at least,

not in the mainstream, which is certainly where a Columbia Picture with Bogart is classed. Truth to tell, the film, with its kinks and twists, seems more like something from Samuel Fuller than Nicholas Ray.

Andrew Solt's screenplay is both brilliant and amazingly savvy. It has the wit to introduce a Bogart character, screenwriter Dixon Steele, exactly as we expect to see a Bogart character—tough, sharp, and self-deprecating. In the very first sequence, he is accosted by a woman in a car (June Vincent, 1946's *BLACK ANGEL*), who tries to remind him that he wrote the script for her last picture. "I make it a point never to see pictures I write," ripostes Dix with a line that inescapably recalls *CASABLANCA*'s Rick saying, "I never make plans that far in advance." Great opening. Pure screen personality Bogart. But then the script goes an extra length, when the woman's husband unreasonably tells him to "stop bothering my wife." "Oh," notes Bogie knowingly, telling her, "You shouldn't have done it, honey, no matter how much money that pig's got." The husband blusters about fighting, and Dix actually starts getting out of his car to do just that. In no time, the film has established that, yes, this is Bogie, but also something else, a variation: a genuinely dangerous and troubled version of his screen persona.

The storyline is also shrewd. Dix picks up dimwitted hatcheck girl Mildred Atkinson (Martha Stewart) to have her tell him the story line of a novel he's been hired to adapt for the screen, but can't bring himself to read. When she's found murdered, he naturally becomes the suspect, a situation not helped by his apparent cynicism. An alibi comes his way in the guise of a neighbor, Laurel (Gloria Grahame in a dynamite performance), who saw him return to his apartment before the girl was killed. Intrigued by Dix, she agrees to act as his secretary while he works on the script, and the two fall in love—with the unconvinced police keeping an eye on him all the while. The plot then pursues the question of whether or not Steele actually committed the murder, while the romance plays out against this decidedly unromantic background.

What really sets the film apart is that it doesn't stop with the complexity of Bogart's character, but extends this depth of characterization to Gloria Grahame's Laurel as well. Rarely has a heroine (almost an anti-heroine) come equipped with so much dubious baggage! Fully as cynical as Steele, Laurel has obviously been around and been kicked around in the process. The details are not filled in—a nice touch, since how often do we clearly know everything about a person?—but are cleverly suggested throughout. We know that she tried to break into the movies and

that she was romantically involved with a wealthy man named Baker, but beyond that, it's all suggestion and hints. Perhaps the strangest turn the film takes is in its almost tangential depiction of her relationship with the one "relic" of her movie-career past—a fairly obvious lesbian masseuse, Martha (Mildred Atkinson), who has attached herself to Laurel as both a path to a secure future and—perhaps—something else in the bargain. At one point, in a conversation about the benefits of a rich marriage and the folly of a genuine romantic entanglement with Dix, Martha cryptically tells her, "You can joke about it, angel, but someday you'll find out who your friend is. I only hope it isn't too late, because this isn't going to be as easy to get out of as it was with Mr. Baker." Appalled by her tone, Laurel orders the woman out. "You'll beg me to come back when you're in trouble. You will, angel, because you don't have anyone else," Martha coolly tells her. That any of this got past the censor is in itself remarkable. That Solt and Ray and Bogart were willing to present a love story—a very adult love story—between two characters with such murky pasts (and presents that never quite allow the pasts to die) is more remarkable still.

So much is praiseworthy about *IN A LONELY PLACE* that only an in-depth analysis could do it justice. What stands out beyond its definitive noir quality and characterizations is its astonishingly haunting quality. Moreover, Bogart's handling of the key scene, in which he describes how the murder might have been committed, is possibly the most memorably chilling moment in his career. "You get to a lonely place in the road," he tells his rapt audience, and then proceeds to graphically detail the murder, even to the extent of saying, "You squeeze harder, harder—it's wonderful to feel her throat crush beneath your arm!" The script's clever reversal of its opening—here the "joke" comes after the revelatory moment—isn't enough to chase away this callous gruseomeness, nor is it likely that Solt wanted to do so, especially since the "joking" nature of the release is so irredeemably cynical. (IN A LONELY PLACE is that rarest of Hollywood movies in its total lack of compromise.) "I've had a lot of experience with matters of this kind—in pictures," Dix tells his listeners. "I assure you I could never throw a lovely body from a moving car. My artistic temperament wouldn't permit it. You see, we so-called creative artists have great respect for cadavers. We treat them with the utmost reverence—put them on soft beds, lay them out on fur rugs, leave them at the foot of a long staircase, but we definitely could never throw them from moving cars as though they were cigarette butts." (Coincidentally, something very like this came to be the "artistic" credo with which producer Ross Hunter would later rationalize his ultra-glossy approach to filmmaking, which in itself might almost be summed up by a line early in *IN A LONELY PLACE*, when Dix tells off a successful producer by pointing out that the man's lack of flops is because "you've made and remade the same picture for the last 20 years.")

IN A LONELY PLACE is a genuinely great film noir, one that should be far better known than it is—and it unquestionably deserves a place near the top of the pantheon of Bogart performances.

—Ken Hanke

THE BLUE DAHLIA (1946)

Johnny Morrison (Alan Ladd) returns home from the war to find his wife has been unfaithful to him. Soon his wife turns up dead and Morrison finds himself the prime suspect; his war buddies Buzz (William Bendix) and George (Hugh Beaumont) try to clear him, but the clues point towards the emotionally damaged Buzz. Along the way, Johnny befriends Helen (Veronica Lake), the wife of the man who was instrumental in his own wife's infidelities. Together with the police they uncover a blackmail scheme that eventually leads to the real killer.

THE BLUE DAHLIA took its name from Hollywood's infamous Black Dahlia murder case, but has none of the gruesome traits of that incident. The film was Raymond Chandler's second foray as a screenwriter (his third and last would be Hitchcock's 1951 *STRANGERS ON A TRAIN*) and finds Chandler in classic form. (Initially, Chandler wanted Buzz to be the killer, callous and desensitized from the brutality of war, until the Navy gave a firm thumbs-down to the idea.)

Visually, the film is somewhat more conventional than many noir offerings, without much of the stylized look of the genre; thematically, it's pure noir, however, with the inclusion of amnesia, helplessness, and venal double-and-triple-crosses. It also was one of the earliest films in the crime genre to address the returning war veteran readjusting to civilian life. And of course, it's always fun to hear square-john LEAVE IT TO BEAVER dad Hugh Beaumont rattling off tough-as-nails dialogue.

—Jerry Renshaw



ACE IN THE HOLE (1951)

Cliff (brawlin' Paul Kelly, who took a break from fist fights long enough to stick his pugnacious mug in this picture), who naturally dismisses it. They all go out on a picnic, but wind up taking refuge in an empty mansion during a thunderstorm. When Vince knows every room in the mansion in detail, Cliff becomes convinced that he actually did commit the murder and concocted the whole story about the dream. Cliff realizes that the whole thing is a bit too tidy, though, when he saves Vince from suicide and it becomes apparent that wealthy Mr. Belknap (Robert Emmett Keene) compelled Vince to murder under hypnosis.

FEAR IN THE NIGHT is faithful to the feel of the Woolrich story, with inventive dream sequences and moody, high contrast black and white camera work. It retains a truly pulpy quality, with seedy set pieces and a propulsive story line, building up to a genuinely suspenseful conclusion. Pulp readers of the thirties and forties were fascinated with the cutting edge of technology and weird science being used for investigative purposes. So what if no one can be hypnotized against their will, it serves the purposes of the story well. An interesting detail is the octagonal room of mirrors in which the murder takes place, which serves both as a plot point and visual device. Orson



ABOVE: Joan Crawford has married Jack Palance, an invitation to *SUDDEN FEAR* (1952). BELOW RIGHT: Ray Milland and Marjorie Reynolds put up a fight against the *MINISTRY OF FEAR* (1944)

Welles' *THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI* (1948) also featured a room of mirrors, but *FEAR IN THE NIGHT* predated Welles' film by a year. All in all, a well made treatment of a classic pulp story, which outshines its grade-C noir origins. (For all the Trekkies: DeForest Kelley, aside from being younger and thinner, acts exactly as he did in *STAR TREK* 20 years later—and, though he's now several years the senior of the average Wal-Mart greeter, exactly as he does now!)

—Jerry Renshaw

I WAKE UP SCREAMING (1941)

Next time someone asks if you've seen any Betty Grable thrillers lately, be aware that amid the many popular musicals the leggy blonde cranked out during the forties was the 1941 noir offering *I WAKE UP SCREAMING*. This change of milieu does not indicate, however, that Betty was able to stretch her range or display a brand new side. Despite the absence of songs, dance, and Technicolor, you pretty much get the same brittle Grable you'd expect and, without the usual glossy trappings, she's a fairly routine presence.

Alas, Grable's costars are nothing to get too worked up over, either. Beefy, greasy haired Victor Mature and attractive-but-vacuous Carole Landis had made their mark the previous year playing cave dwellers in the prehistoric extravaganza *ONE MILLION B.C.* and here, in modern dress and given full sentences to speak, they struggle to prove that they might have hit the big time with a different pair of bodies. This clears the way for the supporting cast to pick up the slack and the movie belongs, hands down, to Laird Cregar.

Cregar, the imposing character actor with the jumbo size and gentle but insinuating voice, was a five year Hollywood wonder who racked up a respectable list of credits during the early forties, only to die of a heart attack before he was thirty. Here he captures your attention right in his first scene, standing in the shadows, calmly menacing Mature during a police interrogation, his bulky silhouette proving more intimidating than any of the more visible cops.

Turns out that Mature (as promotor Frankie Christopher) is the chief suspect in the murder of up-and-coming startlet Vicky Lynn (Landis). Frankie had spotted the pretty lady slinging hash in a Times Square eatery and, sensing a talent that perhaps only he could explain, decided to turn her into the

next big thing. Through flashbacks we see how Landis turned enough heads to start relishing her own superficial glamour girl image, leaving a line of devoted men at her feet including ham actor Robin Ray (Alan Mowbray), two-faced columnist Larry Evans (Allyn Joslyn), and wimpy switchboard operator Harry Williams (Elisha Cook Jr.). All of this was observed by Landis' skeptical sister Grable with a distrust of the whole enterprise, further fueled by her having noticed the occasional lurking presence of the creepy Ed Cornell (Cregar).

Director Bruce Humberstone doesn't exactly dig his nails too deeply into the material, generating little genuine suspense and leaving it to cinematographer Edward Cronjager to create an appropriately dark mood. All other interest rests with Cregar as Cornell, who relentlessly hounds Frankie with sadistic glee. The movie gets what little edge it has from the nasty twist that Cornell actually knows Frankie is innocent, but has his own perverse reasons to pin the crime on him and watch him fry.

Recently uncovered in the Fox vaults and shown on American Movie Classics as part of the compilation *HIDDEN HOLLYWOOD* is a cut sequence in which Grable is seen working in a music store and knocking off a snappy rendition of the song "Daddy." In the finished print, she was not only deprived of any vocalizing but given the more mundane job of stenographer.

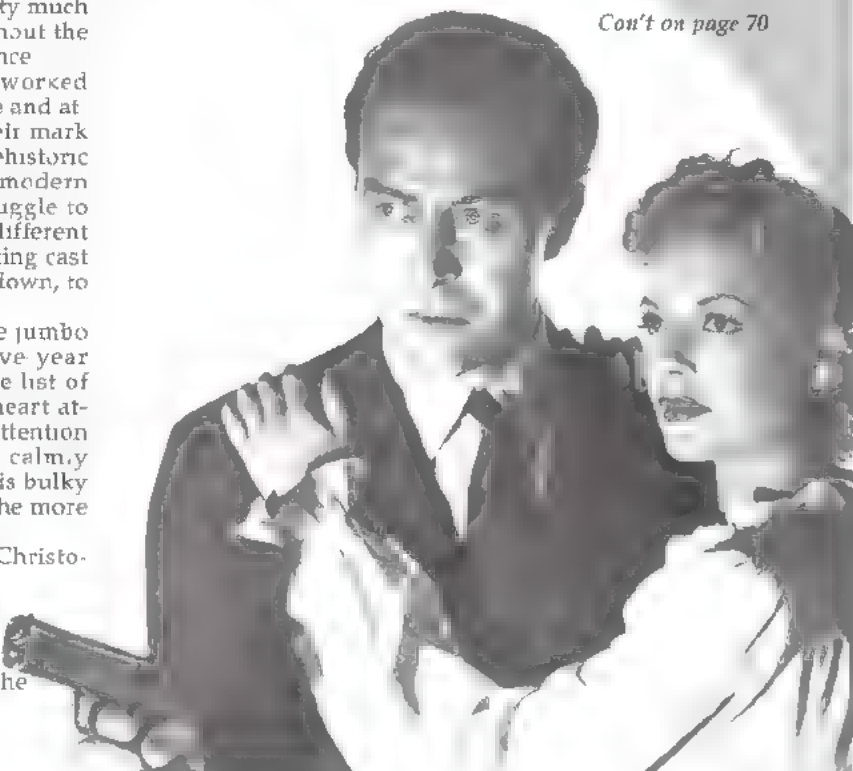
Surprisingly, Fox almost let the irresistible title *I WAKE UP SCREAMING* slip by, worrying that audiences were looking for something else from Grable, and intending to call the movie *THE HOT SPOT*, before someone came to their senses and reinstated the original name of Steve Fisher's novel. It certainly got the customers in the seats although, ironically, the phrase "hot spot" is used in the movie, in reference to the electric chair, while nary a soul is seen waking up screaming.

—Barry Monush

ACE IN THE HOLE (1951)

Billy Wilder's uncompromising *ACE IN THE HOLE* was later reissued as *THE BIG CARNIVAL*. It wasn't successful at the box office under either title. The film dared to paint a bleak portrait of American avarice and exploitation. It displayed a grain of truth that ticket buyers didn't wish to consume.

Con't on page 70





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ABOVE: Three-thousand-year-old Ardet Bey (Boris Karloff) points the way to the tomb of his long-lost love, as Frank Whemple (David Manners) and Professor Pearson (Leonard Mudie) look on in *THE MUMMY* (1932). PAGE 69: Helen Chandler and Edward Van Sloan spook David Manners in *DRACULA* (1931).

DAVID MANNERS

Continued from page 31

"Oh, my God. My God, my hair is blowing all over in the wind," David said as he looked up at me incredulously. "Give me the magnifying glass. I think that's my writing on it."

David read slowly, his face close to the photo. "Hm. 'David Manners uses the 'stay-comb.' That's what gives him that well-groomed look."

Holy smoke," he murmured, as he stared deeply into the eyes on the young picture of himself, as if into a distorted mirror. "Holy Moses. Give me another. Can I stand it?"

"I bet you can."

David continued to look long and hard at the succeeding pictures from the stack.

"What are you thinking about?" I asked cautiously.

"Nothing," David answered too quickly. He was silent as he stared at another photo of Beulah Bondi for a long time without looking up. "Give me some more. Soup for the idiot," demanded David.

"Do you know who that is?"

"It's difficult to see," he muttered. "Wait, there's Gwen. That's awfully good of Gwen. But, who's that man?" David must have felt his stomach again, for he winced silently and then, just as suddenly, he was back to the photos.

"I remember this room. Don't take it away. Hold the glass for me, God! And who's sitting in the armchair? Oh, my," he whispered, rubbing his eyes.

"Are your eyes bothering you? Why don't you rest them for a minute?"

"Let me put these down. Oh, my—" He closed his eyes, then looked up suddenly.

"How do you happen to have these?"

"Doing research for my book. I thought it might make you happy to see them again. Are you okay?"

David's eyes closed again.

I took the pictures. "Let's get you to your room. You can look at these later."

"Can I keep some?" David asked as he relinquished the photos grudgingly.

"Any of them that you want, David."

"Can I have this, too?" David asked plaintively as he held up the magnifying glass.

"Of course," I told him, frustrated that I couldn't do more for him. David moaned in pain as we made our way back to his room. I helped him into bed and he asked if he could see the rest of the photos. There weren't really any more left from Yucca Loma, so I showed him some that we had snapped that very morning.

"You look this photo of me, David."

"I did? Oh, my—I did that? Can I keep it?"

"Sure! And here is a nice one of you and I together."

"What? That's not me," David insisted. "What an awful face!"

"No, it's not," I tried to tell him, realizing by the shocked look on his face that the 60 years between photos was a harsh reminder of reality. "That's a great face."

"It is not," he said sadly, his eyes riveted to the photo.

"Look—I have a big bump on my face. I look awful."

"David, I'll take this and make a copy later, okay?"

"Only if you cut it in half," David muttered as he stuck his tongue out at his image.

"Look at this," I said, handing him another one of the old photos.

"Oh, here I am in front of the garage at Yucca Loma! My God!" He shook his head as his eyes closed again.

"David, I think I should go. You could use some sleep. It looks like to me."

"I am just resting," David moaned quietly.

"How about if I read you a little bit from one of those great David Manners novels I brought with me today?"

"Oh, that would be lovely," David smiled slightly, eyes still closed. "Would you?"

"Of course."

With that, I began to read the first lines from *Convenient Season*. I continued through the first page. "Are you enjoying this, David?" I asked.

"I wonder who could have written that. It's not bad, is it?" he asked quietly, his eyes still closed, as his eyebrows raised.

By the next page I could hear his breathing deepening as his jaw dropped slightly. I read on a little longer and then slowly stood up. I had been back and forth from Los Angeles twice today. I knew I would sleep well tonight. And I knew David would, too. I could only imagine the dreams he would have. I was not sure that I wasn't already dreaming myself. I was glad I could sleep at Marge Mason's board and again tonight and not make the drive south to the City of Angels again today. I turned out David's small bed side light and closed the door silently behind me.

The next day I returned to D. D. feeling very positive. I had spoken to his doctor and gotten permission to take him for a drive. He thought it would be very good for David. As I arrived, David was just leaving breakfast.

"I don't know," David haltingly replied as I told him we could go on a short drive. "It's too cold. I can't go!"

"It's 80 degrees, David. It's a great day. Don't you want to go?"

"I don't want to use the bathroom," he pleaded.

"Of course," I told him, hoping he was all right.

"Okay," David said. "Okay."

I never really understood what happened next. David stayed in his bathroom for half an hour, called for an attendant who came and went, and then came out a different person. I was shocked when I saw his face turned to stone.

"Get out of this scene," he demanded slowly in a chilling voice. I was too stunned to move. I thought I must be guilty of something, but I was not sure what.

"Okay," I stammered. "I'll come back tonight. Do you need some help getting to bed?"

"Just leave this scene!"

I backed out and wandered to my car wondering what I could have done differently. I had one more interview to do. It was with a local spiritualist who had become friends with David over the years. I felt ridiculous going while I

still felt the sting of David's words. As I drove up the mountain to David's friend's house, I began to wonder if perhaps David was just so angry at his frailty and the lack of control he had over his body that he had no other outlet than to yell at me. I went through the morning over and over and racked my brain about the night before, too. I finally convinced myself that I could not have done anything differently, but did not feel much better.

Frank Cassire's large house was impressive. At the top of a mountain, it overlooked the entire valley. This guru was obviously very successful. A multi-car garage full of cars was tied outside. I was a long way from David's old folk's home a few miles away.

Nearly 50 years younger than David, Frank was obviously more colleague than a spiritualist. Small of frame, with a mop of white hair, he looked like part silver-haired adolescent and part mad professor. As he welcomed me to the library a few feet from the front door.

Concerned about David, I asked Frank how he thought he was doing. "David wants nothing these days," Frank began. "I can't think of anyone else besides you who he sees. His old mentor's wife came, but he asked her to leave. If he remembers your name, believe me, he likes you."

That man now has gone from a place of dealing with the silence of the desert, in a concentrated way, to suddenly experiencing the silence all around him in any situation. For a long time, the silence created a lot of alienation. But, he is still not satisfied yet. If he could write now, he could write something you never see expressed. All about nothingness."

As we continued to talk, Frank showed me some of David's writings over the years. I found them very moving, especially the following: "I was born with an empty mind and it seems right that I go out the same way. Let it be as it has to be." I wondered if he was hundering his plan by filling his mind with so much old and new stimulation at this late date. No wonder he was weary. I wished that I had met David earlier.

"My God," Frank exclaimed, shaking his head. "You met him now. Big guy. He has found his way by being in the desert and dealing with silence. Death has been his teacher. He's an actor. This is his greatest scene."

I asked Frank what he knew about David's early years and his Hollywood experience. I wondered if he might know how David left pictures and went to the desert or whether David had ever talked about it.

"He didn't have to," said Frank as he showed me one of David's spiritualist books that has long been out of print. On the first page of the first chapter, David went right to the question so many fans have asked as he wrote about his youth.

"I suppose one might say in unromantic terms I was searching for my heart's desire and, in quite another way, that is exactly what I searched for, but I didn't know it. I suppose all seekers for Shangri-La did not in those days miss a chance of going to Hollywood, but few found the instant success that I did. Wealth and a certain notoriety did not satisfy the inner hunger. When the chance came, I was off again and did the unforgivable thing of stepping out and away from sharing stardom with a big lady star, which I soon discovered from the venom which poured out after my departure was not the correct thing to do."

David was obviously referring to the now famous row he had with Joan Crawford, when he turned down her request to star opposite her. David had been the leading man of choice for every female star in Hollywood. Claudette Colbert, Carole Lombard, Loretta Young, Myrna Loy, Barbara Stanwyck, Katharine Hepburn, and Kay Francis, among others. They never had to worry about David stealing a scene or eclipsing the star. After the Crawford fight, David never stepped into another film studio.

"Hollywood ended his marriage," Frank continued. "But that is something that David had to say good-bye to. But acting? Nothing could stop him. It's like watching Michael Jordan play basketball. It is amazing. And everything in David's life conspired and pushed him to act."

"I think he was searching all the way through Hollywood. It was quality of life he was looking for and he wasn't finding it, which was why he was with the famous spiritual teacher Krishnamurti. He and Krishnamurti were best friends at a very young age. That had tremendous implications. When he first came to Hollywood, they lived together. And I am sure that whatever happened to both of them, transformed them both. It ended catastrophically. Krishnamurti was finished with him and didn't recognize him anymore. It was painful for David."

"It was painful, but it was that pain in the thirties that brought him to Yucca Loma. He designed and built the tennis court, brought people to Yucca Loma, worked on buildings, and had his own relationships there. It was a matter of him forgetting all of Hollywood and not trying to make himself into something that was expected of him. It was not something where he said, 'I am going to change my attitude and stop eating this or I am going to change who my lovers are.' It came about through letting himself be who- ever he was. And then, of course, he wrote books about his experience. His father was a publisher at E. F. Dutton and the head man there. The books were very successful, too. Being an incredibly ineffective character, he saw what was happening to him in Hollywood, going from roles that created a fiction on a man like DRACULA and whatever to going beyond that and developing an identity."

"He didn't want more experiences of sex, of money, of tucking in drugs. He didn't want more. He wanted quality. And the two can't go together. To David, leaving was always a gift because he could become more of who he really was. He would lose himself in you. And that was a fear for him. Does that make sense? It was done out of fear—fear of losing himself. He was overwhelmed by so much input. It was there that the desert came. The silence."

"For David, for a long time, nothingness was very frightening. In his relationship he could cope by keeping very busy in education and being goal driven, always as an escape from himself. And he feels bad about how the thing with Bill ended. His lover. Bill was a fixer-upper kind of guy, kind of like a caretaker—when the door broke, he would





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"Of course."

With that, I began to read the first lines from *Convenient Season*. I continued through the first page. "Are you enjoying this, David," I asked.

"I wonder who could have written that. It's not bad, is it," he asked quietly, his eyes still closed, as his eyebrows raised.

By the next page I could hear his breathing deepening as his jaw dropped slightly. I read on a little longer and then slowly stood up. I had been back and forth from Los Angeles twice today. I knew I would sleep well tonight. And I knew David would, too. I could only imagine the dreams he would have. I was not sure that I wasn't already dreaming myself. I was glad I could sleep at Marge Mason's board and care tonight and not make the drive south to the City of Angels again today. I turned out David's small bedside light and closed the door silently behind me.

The next day I returned to David feeling very positive. I had spoken to his doctor and gotten permission to take him for a drive. He thought it would be very good for David. As I arrived, David was just leaving breakfast.

"I don't know," David haltingly replied as I told him we could go for a short drive. "It's too cold. I can't go!"

"It's 80 degrees, David. It's a great day. Don't you want to get out?"

"I have to use the bathroom," he pleaded.

"Of course," I told him, hoping he was all right.

"Okay," David said. "Okay."

I never really understood what happened next. David stayed in his bathroom for half an hour, called for an attendant who came and went, and then came out a different person. I was shocked when I saw his face turned to stone.

"Get out of this scene," he demanded slowly in a chilling voice. I was too stunned to move. I thought I must be guilty of something, but I was not sure what.

"Okay," I stammered. "I'll come back tonight. Do you need some help getting to bed?"

"Just . . . leave . . . this . . . scene!"

I backed out and wandered to my car wondering what I could have done differently. I had one more interview to do. It was with a local spiritualist who had become friends with David over the years. I felt ridiculous going while I

still felt the sting of David's words. As I drove up the mountain to David's friend's house, I began to wonder if perhaps David was just so angry at his frailty and the lack of control he had over his body that he had no other outlet than to yell at me. I went through the morning over and over and racked my brain about the night before, too. I finally convinced myself that I could not have done anything differently, but I did not feel much better.

Frank Cassirer's large house was impressive. At the top of a mountain, it overlooked the entire valley. This guru was obviously very successful. A multi-doored garage full of cars waited outside. I was a long way from David's old folk's home a few miles away.

Nearly 50 years younger than David, Frank was obviously more colleague than contemporary. Small of frame, with a mop of white hair, he looked like part silver-haired adolescent and part mad professor as he welcomed me to the library a few feet from the front door.

Concerned about David, I asked Frank how he thought he was doing. "David wants nothing these days," Frank began. "I can't think of anyone else besides you who he sees. His old mentor's wife came, but he asked her to leave. If he remembers your name, believe me, he likes you."

"That man now has gone from a place of dealing with the silence of the desert, in a concentrated way, to suddenly experiencing the silence all around him in any situation. For a long time, the silence created a lot of alienation. But, he is still not satisfied yet. If he could write now, he could write something you never see expressed. All about nothingness."

As we continued to talk, Frank showed me some of David's writings over the years. I found them very moving, especially the following: "I was born with an empty mind and it seems right that I go out the same way. Let it be as it has to be." I wondered if I was hindering his plan by filling his mind with so much old and new stimulation at this late date. No wonder he was weary. I wished that I had met David earlier.

"My God," Frank exclaimed, shaking his head. "You met him now. Be glad. He has found his way by being in the desert and dealing with silence. Death has been his teacher. He's an actor. This is his greatest scene."

I asked Frank what he knew about David's early years and his Hollywood experience. I wondered if he might know how David left pictures and went to the desert or whether David had ever talked about it.

"He didn't have to," said Frank as he showed me one of David's spiritual books that has long been out of print. On the first page of the first chapter, David went right to the question so many fans have asked as he wrote about his youth:

"I suppose one might say in unromantic terms I was searching for my heart's desire and, in quite another way, that is exactly what I searched for, but I didn't know it. I suppose all seekers for Shangri-La did not in those days miss a chance of going to Hollywood, but few found the instant success that I did. Wealth and a certain notoriety did not satisfy the inner hunger. When the chance came, I was off again and did the unforgivable thing of stepping out and away from sharing stardom with a big lady star, which I soon discovered from the venom which poured out after my departure was not the correct thing to do."

David was obviously referring to the now-famous row he had with Joan Crawford, when he turned down her request to star opposite her. David had been the leading man of choice for every female star in Hollywood—Claudette Colbert, Carole Lombard, Loretta Young, Myrna Loy, Barbara Stanwyck, Katharine Hepburn, and Kay Francis, among others. They never had to worry about David stealing a scene or eclipsing the star. After the Crawford fight, David never stepped into another film studio.

"Hollywood ended his marriage," Frank continued. "But that is something that David had to say good-bye to. But acting? Nothing could stop him. It's like watching Michael Jordan play basketball. It is amazing. And everything in David's life conspired and pushed him to act."

"I think he was searching all the way through Hollywood. It was quality of life he was looking for and he wasn't finding it, which was why he was with the famous spiritual teacher Krishnamurti. He and Krishnamurti were best friends at a very young age. That had tremendous implications. When he first came to Hollywood, they lived together. And I am sure that whatever happened to both of them, transformed them both. It ended catastrophically. Krishnamurti was finished with him and didn't recognize him anymore. It was painful for David."

"It was painful, but it was that pain in the thirties that brought him to Yucca Loma. He designed and built the tennis court, brought people to Yucca Loma, worked on buildings, and had his own relationships there. It was a matter of him forgetting all of Hollywood and not trying to make himself into something that was expected of him. It was not something where he said, 'I am going to change my attitude and stop eating this or I am going to change who my lovers are.' It came about through letting himself be whoever he was. And then, of course, he wrote books about his experience. His father was a publisher at E.F. Dutton and the head man there. The books were very successful, too. Being an incredibly incisive character, he saw what was happening to him in Hollywood, going from roles that created a fixation on him, like DRACULA and whatever, to going beyond that and developing an identity."

"He didn't want more experiences of sex, of money, of fucking, of drugs. He didn't want more. He wanted quality and the two can't go together. To David, leaving was always a gift because he could become more of who he really was. He wouldn't lose himself in you. And that was a fear for him. Does that make sense? It was done out of fear—fear of losing himself. He was overwhelmed by so much input. It was there that the desert came. The silence."

For David, for a long time, nothingness was very frightening. In his relationship he could cope by keeping very busy in education and being goal driven, always as an escape from himself. And he feels bad about how the thing with Bill ended, his lover Bill was a fixer-upper kind of guy, kind of like a caretaker—when the door broke, he would



fix it. David felt guilty for years, that he was responsible. But when he embraced that nothingness, he was a free man."

Frank and I spoke about David's writing and how it was a shame that, in today's market, none of his work is in print. Frank looked at me in silence and I realized suddenly that the time was up. A few more pieces of the puzzle had fallen into place, or at least I thought they had. Frank walked me out to my car.

"I will tell you something," he said as he closed my car door. "If his books were written now they would be best sellers. No one knows. No one has any idea."

I was weary as I drove back to Marge Mason's. I knew more about David than ever—and perhaps less. Part of me felt I was invading him, but another part thought he was much, much too smart for that. He had left bits and pieces of himself all over the planet; in print, on celluloid and in so many people's memories. I wondered if he was just waiting for someone to pick up the trail.

That night I had a home-cooked meal with Marge and her friend Geri, who had taken care of David, too. I told them about my day with David and how confused I had been. They both understood completely, having had similar experiences many times over the years. I felt better talking to them. I had decided to stay the night, but had to leave very early the next day. If I was going to see David again, it had to be tonight. I asked if either of them wanted to go along. Marge declined; she knew too well what David could be like and decided to give him a day to swing back. Geri acquiesced and hopped in the car with me.

Once again, David was not in his room. I was sure he was better and probably zipping all over the home in his chair. After looking around, though, we still couldn't find him. As we turned the last corner, making a circle back to his room, I spotted him, sound asleep in his chair. An ineffable feeling of sadness enveloped me. Totally vulnerable, as if marooned on an island, he dozed in the middle of a hallway.

Geri gently woke him and we helped him to his bed. He was medicated and never completely woke. When we left him, we took a side door out. As we walked down the path, I stopped. It was a warm, Southern California night, smelling of lemon blossoms, and I suddenly had an urge to see David one more time. You never know when you won't have the opportunity again.

I turned back and could see David in his room by the light of the full moon. His drapes were open and he was



David Manners today—still a handsome man at 98—poses with *Scarlet Street* writer/interviewer Rick McKay.

only a few feet away. He was deep in slumber and looked 200 years old in the moonlight. I realized that, at David's age, one spent less and less time in this world and more and more time flirting with the next. I felt very lucky to have had the time I did with him. I said a silent good night and walked back to the car.

When I got back to New York City I found a letter in my mailbox:

Dear Rick, dear Rick, dear Rick,

Here at 97 I don't know much. Yes, 97, I said! Oh dear, the heart is still young and wanting. Let it play. I'll do the best I can to respond.

First goes the mind. It is near stopping a. together at 97—you know. Wow! What's the next stop called?

Dear Rick, dear Rick. It's too late. Maybe it's a blessing. There was a day!

Oh yes, there was a day!

Blessings, Love!

David



Rick McKay is an award-winning NYC writer/filmmaker and producer for the Emmy award-winning PBS series *CITY ARTS*. He loves to hear from *Scarlet Street* readers via e-mail at rckmck@aol.com or via his web site <http://members.aol.com/rickmckay/>

DARK PASSAGES

Continued from page 66

Kirk Douglas stars as gadabout newspaper reporter Charles Tatum, who comes to New Mexico in search of employment. For him it's a dive, but he's been fired from 11 jobs and really needs the money. He enters the *Albuquerque Sun Bulletin* offices as though he owns the place, and manages to talk himself into a job against the editor's (Porter Hall) better judgment. He and a younger journalist named Herbie Cook (Robert Arthur) are dispatched to cover a rattlesnake hunt. En route, Tatum begins to indoctrinate Herbie with his philosophy of news reporting, including the notion that "facts" can be manipulated and embellished.

The two men stop at a roadside trading post. They learn that a man has been trapped in a nearby cave-in. Tatum smells a marketable story and wastes no time launching a community rescue effort. He intimidates local authorities into allowing him to assume command of the rescue operation. Now in power, he calculatedly extends the procedures over a longer number of days. Resultingly, the public and the regional news media are whipped into a frenzy. Tatum also deliberately maintains control over

exclusivity rights. When the scoop goes national via the wire services, he's set to cash in. Unfortunately, the trapped man doesn't survive the methodical pace of the rescue labors. The reporter is left with nothing, least of all anyone's respect.

Kirk Douglas' performance dominates *ACE IN THE HOLE*. For us to accept its basic premise, we must believe in the manipulative power of the opportunistic reporter. Douglas' characterization is one of intelligence corrupted by cynicism. He's loud, brash, and arrogant enough to convey the impression that he wields more authority than anyone else. Tatum's greatest strength is his uncanny ability to employ others' own foibles against them. The buried man's unfulfilled wife (Jan Sterling) wants their failing trading post to show a profit. The county sheriff covets reelection.

Tatum's condescending treatment of local Indians and Mexicans enables him to simultaneously fuel the story's human interest angle ("White man imprisoned in Indian burial ground") while frightening ethnic workers from desecrating sacred ancestral graves. That strategy accomplishes multiple objectives: it provides a sensationalistic hook for the media, as well as rendering it more difficult to free the victim in a timely fashion.

If *ACE IN THE HOLE*'s focus was restricted to Douglas reporter, it might have been a one-note study of megalomania. But Billy Wilder's vision also indicts the insatiable news media's pandering to the exploitative elements. The public itself does not escape scrutiny—Wilder depicts the citizens' desire to experience tragedy from a safe distance. The film still has a contemporary feel to it, considering the encroachment of tabloid journalism into our daily lives. Even our political arena is driven by "stories" that have been drawn out to the point that many people no longer care about them.

John F. Black

DARK ALIBI (1946)

After the very disappointing *RED DRAGON* (1945), it's a relief to find Phil Karlson returning to the Charlie Chan series to follow up his Chan *noir* *THE SHANGHAI COBRA* (1945) with the even better *DARK ALIBI*. It is probably the best of the Sidney Toler Chan films made by Monogram. Karlson here crafts a film that is perhaps less *noir* specific: the glistening rain-drenched streets of *SHANGHAI COBRA* are missing, for example—but one that is, if anything, more tough-minded and gritty, which may very likely be due to the notorious cheese-paring habits of the studio. Karlson, however, differs in his approach to this drawback by playing it up and using it to his own advantage, while here having the advantage of one of series regular George Callahan's best scripts. (Ironically, it was his last effort for the Chan films.) The story blends one the writer's serviceable, but typically loopy, plots with the most acidly amusing dialogue in all the Toler efforts. One of the unheralded delights of the Toler Monograms is the more sarcastic tone of Toler's lines. Nowhere is that tone more apparent than in *DARK ALIBI*, which is perfectly in keeping with the overall mood of the film.

Much as in *THE SHANGHAI COBRA*, Karlson starts the film with a bang—in this case presenting a very stylish and atmospheric bank robbery (on a slightly redressed, but cannily lit, set from *SHANGHAI COBRA*) that sets the dark-edged tone of the movie. The point is brought home when the robbery is capped with the cold-blooded murder of a bank guard who has the misfortune of encountering the perpetrators. Offhanded casual violence like this is a world removed from the generally cozy tone of the Charlie Chan series. Warner Oland was never like this!

A good portion of the action—the film was obviously written and designed to be played within certain budgetary confines—takes place at a grim boarding house ironically called the Foss Family Hotel. The family that would under-

take to inhabit this hotel would either have to be in very dire straits (the atmosphere bears an interesting similarity to Orson Welles' descriptions of the boarding house in which his original cut of 1942's *THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS* ended) or else have a pretty odd, if not downright peculiar, notion of "family." And the "family" that inhabits this world redefines dysfunctional—a cross-section of humanity that might make even the most hardened exponent of existentialism think twice, all lorded over by the vicious and virtuous Miss Foss (Edna Holland). So obnoxiously sanctimonious and unpleasant is she that she finds herself on the receiving end of one of Charlie's most pointed "veiled" insults when she comments on the "ugliness" of his trade: "Ugliest trade sometime have moment of joy. Even gravedigger know some people for whom he would do his work with extreme pleasure." The only normal characters—or perhaps the only characters normal enough to realize that there is anything amiss about this way of life—are Thomas Harley (Edward Earle) and his daughter, June (Teala Loring). In a grimly ironic touch, it is Harley who is arrested for the robbery and murder. It seems like a cut-and-dried case, since his fingerprints are liberally peppered throughout the bank—and to make matters worse, the poor fellow just happens to be an ex-con.

This, of course, is used as the basic setup—dutiful daughter, trying to clear her father's name (not to mention get him out of the death house) calls on the celebrated detective Charlie Chan for assistance. "Case seem quite perfect. Almost too perfect," opines our hero just before accepting it, much to the chagrin of sidekick Birmingham (Mantan Moreland), who complains, "Why do you always have to hurry to a murder? Why can't you just ooze down to one?" Charlie's investigations proceed along the usual lines of a Chan picture, but are all just a little harder-edged, just a little more cynical, and imbued with considerable style and atmosphere.

Not to worry, however: *DARK ALIBI* never forgets for a moment that it's a Charlie Chan outing. In fact, it affords an hysterically funny extension of Mantan Moreland's trademark cross-talk routine with his old vaudeville partner, Ben Carter (here cast as a convict Mantan bumps into when the investigation takes him to a prison). Rather than being an isolated scene as is usually the case, this encounter is used as a running gag in the film, showeasing Moreland even more than the series tended to do on the whole. Taking this routine to its delightfully illogical conclusion, *DARK ALIBI* even brings Charlie into the routine for a tag scene in which he overhears Birmingham and Carter arguing and intrudes on an unfinished thought.

LEFT: At the midway point of *DARK PASSAGE* (1947), the audience still hadn't seen Bogie's kisser, but there was ample compensation in the form of Lauren Bacall. **RIGHT:** One of the best film noirs had one of the worse titles. *THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS* (1946) starred Barbara Stanwyck in top femme fatale mode and Kirk Douglas in a prime example of his early spineless jellyfish persona, and even found room for Elizabeth Scott and Van Heflin.





They had faces then, as Gloria Swanson proves in this (ahem) shot from *SUNSET BLVD* (1950).

by saying, "No, no, no, no. Birmingham not do that. He go see landlady and she tel him . . ." "She lied. I don't owe her a cent. Listen, Mr. Chan, do you know her. . ." interrupts Carter. "Yeah, I met him last time. You know when . . ." agrees Charlie, only to be interrupted by Birmingham. "That's right, Mr. Chan, that's the time I took it over to . . ." At this point, a completely frustrated Tommy Chan (Benson Fong) explodes, "Took what over to where?"—where-

upon the others, in this convoluted manner, explain everything to him. For this sequence alone, *DARK ALIBI* would be a film very worth having. That it also happens to be in one of the series' most atmospheric and unusual entries is one of the happier occurrences in the history of film.

—Ken Hanke

SUNSET BLVD (1950)

The metaphorical boundaries of the *film noir* tradition extend beyond low-rent apartments and back alleys. Billy Wilder's *SUNSET BLVD*, a 1950 lament for the denizens of the silent film era, is situated in the exclusive Beverly Hills district of Los Angeles. Hollywood proper is a town nourished by the merchandising of celluloid dreams. But beneath the tinsel and glamor lies a community of artists cast aside by the fickle nature of the industry.

William Holden plays Joe Gillis, a struggling young screenwriter unable to transcend B-movie status. In the picture's opening scene, he floats in a swimming pool with a bullet lodged in his back. Although he describes

the events that have led him to this predicament via voiceover, the fact remains that the film is being narrated by a corpse. There can be no surprise ending, no final hope for redemption.

Holden's flight from automobile repossession leads him to a forbidding mansion on the fringes of Sunset Boulevard. The house is populated by the aging silent screen star Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) and her former director/husband (Erich von Stroheim). Once a major celebrity, Norma now exists as a recluse enveloped by artifacts from her past glory.

SUNSET BLVD centers on the dependent relationship between Norma and Joe. He's desperate for money, at a time when she longs for a return ticket to the limelight. Thus, they forge an age spanning partnership, with Joe polishing her own elephantine script into a comeback vehicle. Norma also desires his youthful masculinity, a commodity which he grudgingly doles out to her.

Norma's penultimate rejection comes from the "modern" Hollywood. Symbolically, the studio's interest in her stems not from her collaborative script, but from her automobile. The vintage of the car is envisioned as a convenient cinematic device to recall the past; Norma herself is no longer desirable to the new management.

Joe's final rejection of her has led us to his watery grave. He has peppered his narration with *film noir* lingo, lacing it with deadpan sarcasm and laconic asides. (Borrowed from one of his own unsold screenplays, perhaps?) His was an existence of missed opportunities, financial irresponsibility, and days spent hacking screenplays in his bathrobe.

SUNSET BLVD climaxes as Norma shoots the departing Joe in the back. Her Beverly Hills mansion, with its ambience of gradual decline now punctuated with the stench of death, stands as an ironic symbol of the Hollywood changing of the guard. For Norma, the young screenwriter represented a possible avenue back to motion pictures. But the messenger himself was exploitative, and the new studio management evidenced no genuine interest in its own history. We're left with a demented actress, and a waterlogged writer who may ironically achieve the brief notoriety that escaped him in life. The great tinsel and glamor capital has succeeded in simultaneously devouring its old, as well as its young.

—John F. Black

To Be Continued . . .

SLOWLY SHE TURNED . . .

Continued from page 35

mittedly, after first endangering it—and perishes in the attempt.)

The highlight of any film called *NIAGARA*, needless to say, must be the inevitable sequence in which someone is in danger of going over the falls, and director Henry Hathaway does a splendid job as he seemingly almost drowns two of his stars. Only the final shot, of the scuttled craft going over, disappoints.

In spite of its flaws—for that matter, in spite of its many virtues—*NIAGARA* survives mainly as a vehicle for the most famous MM since Mickey Mouse. For Monroe devotees, the movie is a sheer delight. (For those unenamored of the screen's most famous siren, it'll do nothing.) It shows off the breathy superstar in full Technicolor glory, her blonde hair glowing, her ruby red lips (and, in one scene, matching dress) redder than the blood rarely shown in a fifties film. Marilyn walks, she talks, she sings—and if she doesn't reach the heights of her gifts as she does in *GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES* (1953) and *SOME LIKE IT HOT* (1959), well, neither does *NIAGARA* attain the perfection of those instant camp classics. Still, it's a nice place to spend some time, even today.



Having run out of *Merry Widows* (in Hitchcock's 1943 *SHADOW OF A DOUBT*), Joseph Cotten turns his lethal attention to Marilyn Monroe in Henry Hathaway's *NIAGARA* (1953). Serves her right: after all, she was planning to kill him.

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COLEEN GRAY

Continued from page 49

CG: They used lens paper. It took two hours to put on in the morning and two hours to take off at night. I couldn't eat lunch or open my mouth. I sipped something through a straw, because if I opened my mouth it would crack the paper around the mouth. Eddie Dein was the genius on that one, and that picture was 10 days of sheer joy. We had such fun! I loved it, just loved it! I got to camp all over the place, it was flamboyant and really, excruciatingly funny. We had a good time doing it—it was so corny, but we loved it. We all got along so well we had to sober up to do the scenes and not laugh. One of my favorite scenes is where I pick up Arthur Batanides. He wants to rob me, and I want his pineal gland! (Laughs) I just think that it is a gem! It was the one and only time I got top star billing in a motion picture!

SS: You made a sci-fi film in 1961 called PHANTOM PLANET.

CG: PHANTOM PLANET was really corny, but Francis X. Bushman played my father. He was wonderful. Just to get a change to talk to someone you admire—my word! If he could be in PHANTOM PLANET, I guess I could, too!

SS: Any closing comments?

CG: Heavens, I loved most every day I worked. I've done a lot of films that were not great, but it gives me a great

deal of satisfaction to have been part of the classics I was in. I feel very lucky having done RED RIVER, KISS OF DEATH, NIGHTMARE ALLEY, and RIDING HIGH. I always think of those four as being gems.

SCREEN AND SCREEN

Continued from page 23

the film properly in this splendid David Shepard restoration—presented in its proper 1.21:1 ratio—was something along the lines of a cinematic religious experience. In general, I distrust "best of" superlatives, but if there really is a better silent movie than SUNRISE, I have yet to see it.

Everything said about the film is true. It is a technical marvel. Everywhere the viewer looks there is something striking and gloriously beautiful to see. The sheer technique of it all is breathtaking. The wholly fabricated city set of the film is amazing and the use of forced perspective (whether or not aided and abetted by the legendary—and seemingly unconfirmed—use of midgets and children to bolster the illusion) is perfection itself. The stunningly beautiful swamp set, the moon effects, the melding of models, full-size items, and special effects achieve a poetic realism—almost a hyper-reality, a reality apart that is somehow more than real. Seemingly ef-

fortlessly, Murnau blends his studio settings with location shooting, as in the very real crossing of the lake into the city. Murnau's approach to genuine locations is so personal that they become perfectly at one with the world of his film.

But why this technical wizardry? What exactly was a sophisticated artist doing with his UFAesque box of tricks at Fox Beverly Hills? What could justify all this effort being expended on a story line that, in its apparent romanticized simplicity, might have made D.W. Griffith blush? Two things exactly: poetry and the reality of human emotions portrayed in an unusually straightforward manner. What Murnau accomplished on a technical level, he also accomplished on a hu-

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This never happened in her musicals! Marilyn Monroe dies at the hands of psychotic husband Joseph Cotten in *NIAGARA* (1953).

NATURAL WONDERS

Continued from page 36

Carey would distinguish himself as a member of John Ford's acting company, appearing in such film classics as *SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON* (1949), *RIO GRANDE* (1950), and *THE SEARCHERS* (1956). Beckman would star in the television series *BRONK, HERE COME THE BRIDES*, and *McHALE'S NAVY*, winning acting awards and appearing in commercials. He would return to Niagara Falls six times, including a trip for his honeymoon. Neither Richard Allan nor Max Showalter would return to Niagara until this reunion. Showalter's career has continued through the nineties, with appearance in such films as *ELMER GANTTRY* (1960), *THE MUSIC MAN* (1962), and *SIXTEEN CANDLES* (1984). He would drop "Casey Adams" for his original name when he toured with old friend Betty Grable in *HELLO, DOLLY!* His career continues to flourish and he has added one-man shows of his paintings and a Christmas musical which he has cowritten, *TOUCH OF THE CHILD*, to his list of accomplishments.

At 75, Richard Allan has replaced his leading man good looks with a distinguished handsomeness combining a dapper gentlemanly air with a trim figure. After *NIAGARA*, he continued his film and musical career, traveling to Europe to appear in films, clubs, and on the stage. He returned to Hollywood, teaming with Diane Hartman in a nightclub act before retiring from show business.

How was it to return to Niagara Falls? Great! Wouldn't have missed it for the world!



NIGHTMARE ALLEY

Continued from page 50

to sleep it off in. Whaddya say? Anyway, it's only temporary—just until we can get a real geek." "Geek?" asks a horrified Stan. "You know what a geek is, don't you?" asks the owner. Stan admits that he does and is in turn asked, "Do you think you can handle it?" "Mister, I was made for it," announces Stan bitterly, knocking back a drink.

This is where Gresham's novel ends, but the film opts to soften things just a bit by adding a sequence in which Stan, in his geek incarnation, goes berserk and is taken in by Molly, who happens to be working with the same carnival. While this tacked-on business allows the viewer to come away from the film with at least a sense that there may be some kind of redemption for Stan, it is in no way a happy ending and doesn't in the least flinch from depicting Stanton Carlisle at the very bottom. There is nothing remotely glamorous about either his actions or his appearance—if anything, Power is made to look worse than Ian Keith, whose makeup suggested the fallen artiste, while Power looks every inch the dissipated geek we have previously only been allowed to imagine. It is probably the most daring transformation any matinee idol had attempted at that time and a black conclusion to one of the grimmest and least compromising of films noir.

Unfortunately, Zanuck liked the finished film no better than he had liked the idea in the first place. Everyone associated with *NIGHTMARE ALLEY* was rightfully proud of the accomplishment, but the mogul, mindful of the threat he felt it posed to his biggest star's career, unceremoniously rushed the film into release, so that he might be able to make amends to Power's public by giving them the already completed—and vastly inferior—*CAPTAIN FROM CASTILE* as the studio's 1947 Christmas release. Minus the full power of the studio's publicity machine, *NIGHTMARE ALLEY* was not a success at the box office, but critics generally took notice. *The New Yorker's* John McCarten noted that Power was "excellent in the leading role." In *The New York Times*, critic Thomas M. Pryor disliked the film on the whole, finding the subject distasteful and unsuitable entertainment, but even he conceded that Power was afforded "a juicy role and sinks his teeth into it, performing with considerable versatility and persuasiveness." And no less a critic than James Agee offered this assessment: "Tyrone Power, who asked to be cast in the picture, steps into a new class as an actor."

Indeed, he had, and even though things did not quite turn out the way he might have hoped—largely thanks to Zanuck's refusal to effectively promote the film—Power scored a major personal victory in what today remains his best performance in his best and most powerful film.



SCREEN AND SCREEN

Continued from page 73

man level. The main characters in *SUNRISE* have a weighty believability that far transcends their everyman status as *The Man* and *The Wife*. At the onset, they seem to be little more than the types their nameless characters indicate, but they become more recognizably human the more we see them. By the middle of the film, it is impossible not to care deeply for them. No small measure of this must be attributed to George O'Brien and Janet Gaynor, two players one can hardly believe had such performances in them. O'Brien is especially fine in a role that called for a good deal of risk taking on his part. A popular star,

O'Brien allowed himself to be made unglamorous for the early portions of the film—hunched over, wearing weighted shoes to give him a hulking appearance—and then threw himself into an emotional performance hardly in keeping with his stolid manly image. His is not only one of the great silent film performances, it is simply one of the great performances in film.

The laserdisc is presented with two soundtracks—the original created by Hugo Riesenfeld for the film in 1927 and a new score by Timothy Brock. Brock's score is a labor of love, but as he himself remarks in his liner notes, "my first reaction was to question the need for a new score."

There really is nothing to fault about this remarkable film's disc presentation. The side change is excellently chosen, the images are beautifully rendered, and there is a splendid supplemental section of outtakes from the editor's original work print. Granted, the reproduction of Carl Mayer's script is hard to read and being in CLV leaves the viewer at the mercy of the speed at which the disc's creators think it can be read, but this is a minor flaw and in no way detracts from this absolutely essential presentation of the film. The only bad thing to be gleaned from the experience is simply that the best film I've seen in 1998 was made in 1927. THAT is sobering.

—Ken Hanke

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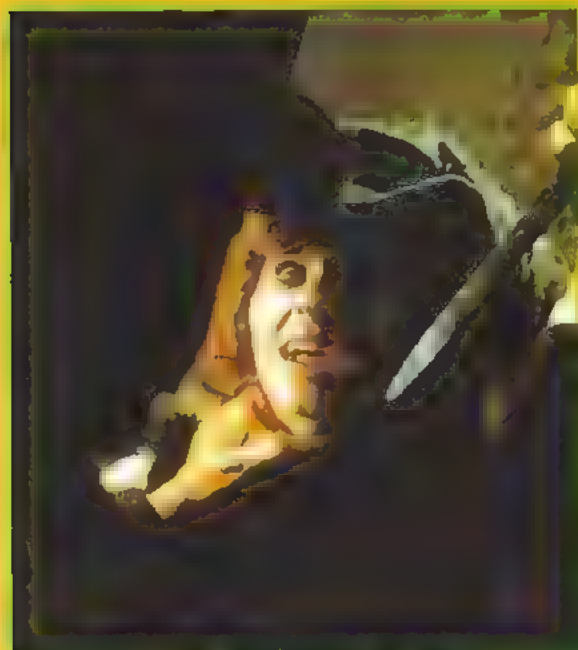
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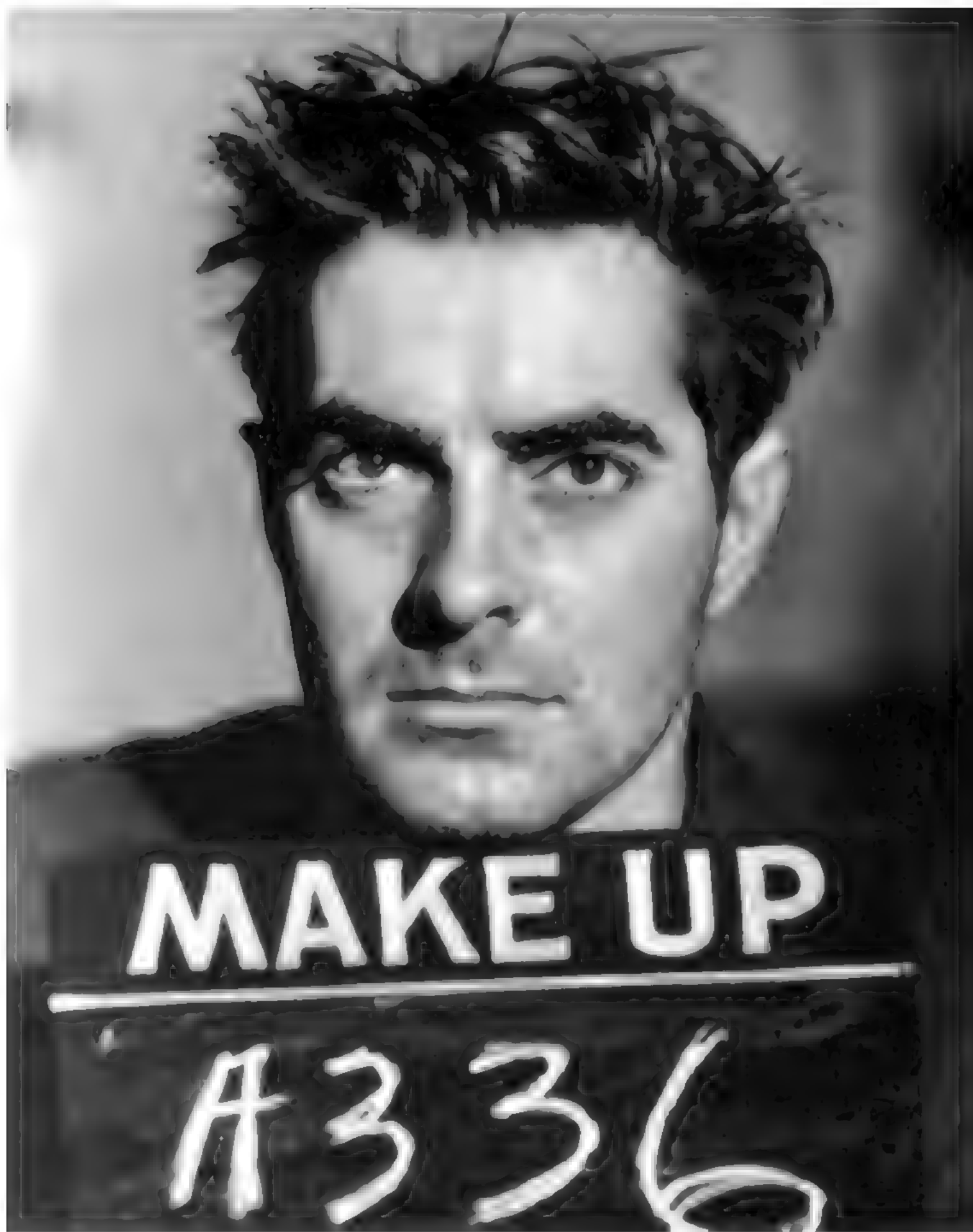












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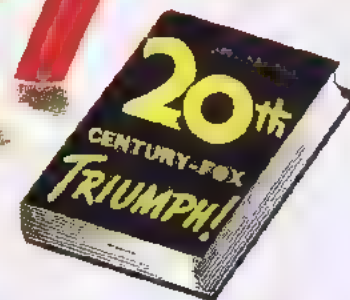
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TYRONE POWER

in

NIGHTMARE ALLEY



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Directed by EDMUND GOULDING Produced by GEORGE JESSEL

Screen play by Jules Furthman • Based on the novel by William Lindsay Gresham • Director of photography, Lee Garmes, A.S.C.

























